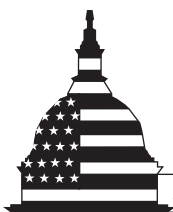


April 2011

CATASTROPHIC PLANNING

States Participating in
FEMA's Pilot Program
Made Progress, but
Better Guidance
Could Enhance Future
Pilot Programs



G A O

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Why GAO Did This Study

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 highlighted gaps in the nation's preparedness to respond effectively to catastrophic incidents. The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designed the Task Force for Emergency Readiness (TFER) pilot program to advance and integrate state and federal catastrophic planning efforts. TFER, first envisioned by the Department of Defense (DOD), ran from September 2008 to September 2010, and FEMA provided the five participating states—Hawaii, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Washington, and West Virginia—with \$350,000 each to develop plans, build relationships with stakeholders, and document lessons learned (i.e., TFER's stated objectives). As requested, GAO evaluated the extent to which (1) FEMA followed sound management practices in designing, administering, and evaluating TFER and (2) the five participating states satisfied TFER's stated objectives. GAO analyzed FEMA guidance, such as the TFER Pilot Information Package, conducted site visits to all five participant states, and met with relevant FEMA and DOD officials, to evaluate FEMA's management of TFER and the states' implementation of it.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that FEMA develop policies and guidance that follow sound management practices for future pilot programs, and share TFER results with stakeholders. FEMA agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-11-383](#) or key components. For more information, contact Davi M. D'Agostino at (202) 512-5431 or dagostinod@gao.gov or William O. Jenkins, Jr. at (202) 512-8777 or jenkinswo@gao.gov

April 2011

CATASTROPHIC PLANNING

States Participating in FEMA's Pilot Program Made Progress, but Better Guidance Could Enhance Future Pilot Programs

What GAO Found

FEMA developed program objectives and procedures for administering the TFER pilot, but did not develop other elements of sound management practices in designing, administering, and evaluating pilot programs that GAO identified from its prior work and social science literature. FEMA developed objectives for the pilot, but did not document standards for determining the pilot's success. FEMA also provided resources such as funding, training, and support, but FEMA did not always follow the procedures it established for TFER. For example, FEMA did not consistently conduct biweekly conference calls with the states, and four states reported that it would have been helpful if FEMA provided more guidance. FEMA did not develop a data analysis plan, which could have better ensured FEMA collected data on the extent to which the pilot states coordinated with key stakeholders and provided reasonable assurance that FEMA conducted a systematic assessment of TFER using comparable data across the five pilot states. In Spring 2010, FEMA announced TFER would not continue past the pilot stage before evaluating TFER on its merits in strengthening and advancing state catastrophic planning, but FEMA allowed the states to draw down the remaining TFER funds and continue to complete initiatives started under TFER through August 2011. GAO previously reported in April 2009 that FEMA faced challenges in assessing pilot program data, and FEMA officials reported the agency does not have pilot program policy guidance. In the absence of this, FEMA lacks a systematic approach to developing, administering, and evaluating pilot programs. FEMA could better ensure other pilot programs meet their intended goals by developing policies and guidance that include sound management practices.

All five states have taken steps to follow FEMA's guidance to address TFER's objectives, but no state has fully addressed them all (see table below). First, two of the five states have completed draft catastrophic plans, and all five states reported following FEMA's planning process. Second, all five states built relationships with stakeholders such as state agencies and FEMA, but state officials said coordination with DOD—a key federal stakeholder who may be called upon to assist in disaster response—was limited. State officials reported not coordinating with DOD because they did not have draft plans for DOD officials to review. Third, all states have documented lessons learned to date, but four states have not exercised TFER plans to determine their effectiveness in the event of an emergency.

Progress in Meeting FEMA's TFER Pilot Program Objectives

	Hawaii	Massachusetts	South Carolina	Washington	West Virginia
Develop plans	●	●	●	●	●
Build relationships	●	●	●	●	●
Document lessons learned	●	●	●	●	●

- Substantial progress: average state progress was greater than 80 percent
- Some progress: average state progress ranged from 20 percent to 80 percent
- Little to no progress: average state progress was less than 20 percent

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

April 8, 2011

Congressional Requesters

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 highlighted gaps in the nation's preparedness to respond effectively to catastrophic incidents. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was charged with leading the nation in preparing for disasters in coordination with other federal entities like the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Justice; the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories; tribal, city, and county governments; nonprofit organizations; and private entities.¹ The Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2010 appropriated approximately \$7.1 billion to FEMA, and FEMA has allocated more than \$1.8 billion to preparedness grant programs.²

The Task Force for Emergency Readiness (TFER) pilot program was launched by FEMA in September 2008 to strengthen state preparedness for catastrophic disasters by facilitating greater capacity in and more comprehensive integration of planning efforts across all levels of government through \$1.75 million in grant funds. In particular, TFER emphasized integration of planning efforts across sectors, jurisdictions, and functional disciplines, as well as integration among state, regional, and federal agencies, primarily FEMA and DOD. The TFER grant funds allowed states to hire three full-time planners with civilian and military planning expertise to develop catastrophic plans. FEMA selected five states to participate in this pilot program: Hawaii, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Washington, and West Virginia.

¹ The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 provided that FEMA must lead the nation's efforts to prepare for, protect against, recover from, and mitigate against the risk of natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters, including catastrophic incidents. 6 U.S.C. § 313(b)(2)(A).

² Pub. L. No. 111-83, 123 Stat. 2142 (2009).

Planning is a key component of national preparedness.³ According to FEMA planning guidance, planning provides a methodology to examine the entire life cycle of a potential crisis, determine required capabilities, and help stakeholders learn and practice their roles for building and sustaining national preparedness capabilities against terrorist attacks and other hazards. This is particularly important in a catastrophic incident, defined as any natural disaster, act of terrorism, or man-made disaster that results in extraordinary levels of casualties or damage or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, or government functions in an area.⁴ Catastrophic events differ from a normal disaster in the severity of the damage, number of persons affected, and the scale of preparation and response required. They quickly overwhelm or incapacitate local and/or state response capabilities, thus requiring coordinated assistance from outside the affected area.

You asked us to review the TFER pilot program. Our objectives for this report were to identify the extent to which (1) FEMA followed sound management practices in developing, administering, and evaluating the TFER pilot program and (2) the five participating states satisfied the TFER pilot program's stated objectives.

To conduct this work, we completed site visits to all five participant states from June through September 2010 and interviewed relevant FEMA, DOD, and DHS headquarters and regional officials. During our site visits, we met with the planners hired through the TFER pilot program and other state, local, and DOD and FEMA regional officials to discuss FEMA's management of the TFER pilot program and the states' implementation of it.

To identify the extent to which FEMA followed sound management practices in developing, administering, and evaluating TFER, we analyzed program guidance and other key documents including the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Guidance and Application Kit. We also

³ See, GAO, *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning, Exercise, and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009); *Emergency Preparedness: FEMA Faces Challenges Integrating Community Preparedness Programs into Its Strategic Approach* [GAO-10-193](#), (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 29, 2010).

⁴ As defined in the Post-Katrina Act. 6 U.S.C. § 701(4).

analyzed our prior work on pilot programs and program management⁵ as well as social science literature⁶ to determine elements of sound management practices. We grouped these elements into three categories: design, administration, and evaluation. We analyzed the program guidance, other documents, and information obtained from our interviews and site visits and compared the results of our work with the identified elements of sound management practices. Furthermore, we analyzed our prior work and DHS Office of Inspector General reports on FEMA grants administration and catastrophic preparedness to identify any past challenges.⁷

To identify the extent to which the five states participating in TFER addressed the program's stated objectives, we analyzed information that FEMA provided in the TFER Pilot Information Package and further defined in its TFER Evaluation Criteria document. The three program objectives included developing plans, building relationships, and documenting lessons learned, and FEMA provided criteria to measure progress towards addressing each of these objectives. We used FEMA's criteria to then assess states' progress toward addressing the three program objectives. Additionally, FEMA identified key components of each objective. To assess the states' progress towards addressing TFER's program objectives, we assigned a numerical ranking to each objective's components and then averaged the components' numerical rankings for each of the objectives. We then assigned designations to these averages.⁸ We determined that states could not receive a designation of "substantial

⁵ GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Strengthen Its Approach for Evaluating the SRFMI Data-Sharing Pilot Program*, [GAO-09-45](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 7, 2008); GAO, *Designing Evaluations*, [GAO/PEMD-10.1.4](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1991).

⁶ P.H. Rossi, M.W. Lipsey, and H.E. Freeman, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: 2004); Project Management Institute, *The Standard for Program Management*® (Newton Square, Pa: 2006); and Daniel L. Stufflebeam, *Program Evaluations Metaevaluation Checklist (Based on The Program Evaluation Standards)*, 1999.

⁷ GAO, *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning, Exercise, and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009); GAO, *Emergency Management: Observations on DHS's Preparedness for Catastrophic Disasters*, [GAO-08-868T](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 11, 2008); Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Efficacy of DHS Grant Programs*, [OIG-10-69](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 22, 2010).

⁸ Averages greater than 80 percent were designated as 'substantial progress'; averages from 20 percent to 80 percent were designated as 'some progress'; and averages less than 20 percent were designated as 'little or no progress.'

progress” for their objectives without meeting the criteria related to these key components. To assist in assessing states’ progress, we reviewed and analyzed the documents obtained during our site visits that included draft plans, progress reports, and status briefings, and interviewed cognizant officials. As part of this analysis, we reviewed the guidance in FEMA’s Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101, which provides instructions regarding plan structure, and we used this information to determine the extent to which the states’ plans adhered to FEMA’s guidance.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2010 to April 2011 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Additional details on our scope and methodology are contained in appendix I.

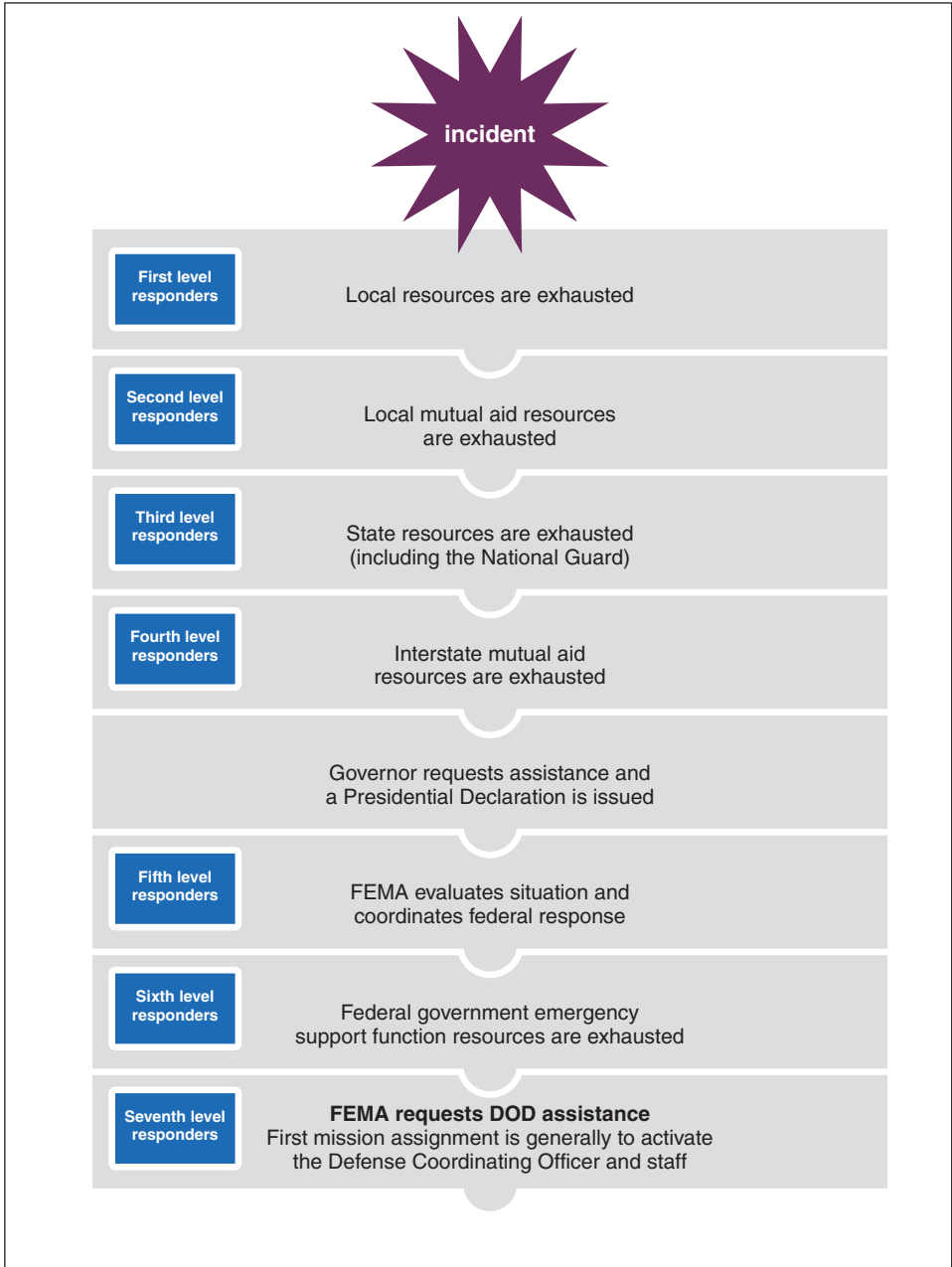
Background

The National Response Framework Established a Tiered Response for Emergencies

DHS issued the National Response Framework for federal, state, and local agencies to use in planning for emergencies.⁹ It establishes standardized doctrine, terminology, and processes for responding to disasters and other catastrophic events in the United States. The framework is based on a tiered, graduated response; that is, incidents are managed at the lowest jurisdictional levels and supported by additional higher-tiered response capabilities as needed (see fig. 1).

⁹ The *National Response Plan* preceded the Department of Homeland Security’s *National Response Framework* (Washington, D.C.: January 2008). Several years earlier, the President issued *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8—National Preparedness* (Dec. 17, 2003) that called on the Secretary of Homeland Security to carry out and coordinate preparedness activities with public and private organizations involved in such activities.

Figure 1: Roles of FEMA and DOD—the Primary Stakeholders for TFER—within the National Response Framework



Source: GAO analysis of DOD, FEMA, and state information.

Note: Each Emergency Support Function comprises a coordinator, a primary agency, and support agencies—usually governmental agencies—that plan and support response activities. Support agencies are assigned based on their authorities, resources, and capabilities in a given functional area. According to the National Response Framework, if a state anticipates that its resources may be exceeded, the governor can request assistance from the federal government and/or other states through mutual aid and assistance agreements such as Emergency Management Assistance Compacts.

Local governments respond to emergencies using their own resources or assistance from neighboring localities. For larger-scale incidents that overwhelm the capabilities of local governments, assistance from the state may be sought. Depending on the circumstances, states have capabilities, such as the National Guard,¹⁰ that can help communities respond and recover. If additional resources beyond what an individual state can provide are required, the state may request assistance from other states through Emergency Management Assistance Compacts or from the federal government.¹¹ Catastrophic incidents, by definition, result in extraordinary levels of damage or disruption to government functions, and governors have the option to seek federal assistance. The federal government has a wide array of capabilities and resources to assist state and local agencies respond to incidents. In accordance with the National Response Framework and applicable laws including the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act),¹² various federal departments and agencies may play primary, coordinating, or supporting roles, based on their authorities and resources and the nature of the incident. In certain instances, national military capabilities may be requested to respond to an incident. Defense resources are committed

¹⁰ The National Guard holds a unique dual status in that it performs its state missions under the command of the state's governor and federal missions as needed under the command of the President. Currently, the majority of the National Guard's personnel, training, and equipment are provided for its federal warfighting mission with funding appropriated to DOD. The National Guard can use capabilities provided by DOD when available to respond to domestic emergencies while operating under the command of the governors and generally paid for with state funding. Further, under certain circumstances such as homeland security-related activities or federally declared disasters, federal funding has been provided for missions carried out by the states' National Guard.

¹¹ Pub. L. No. 104-321, 110 Stat. 3877 (1996). The Emergency Management Assistance Compact is a congressionally ratified organization that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid. Through this emergency management assistance compact, a disaster-impacted state can request and receive assistance from other member states quickly and efficiently, resolving two key issues upfront: liability and reimbursement.

¹² Pub. L. No. 100-707, 102 Stat. 4689 (1988) (codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5208). The Stafford Act is the most widely used authority under which federal disaster assistance occurs.

following approval by the Secretary of Defense or at the direction of the President.

According to FEMA planning guidance,¹³ plans must be integrated vertically among levels of government (e.g., local, state, and federal) to ensure a common operational focus and horizontally (e.g., health departments and law enforcement) to ensure that individual department and agency operations plans complement the jurisdiction's plans. This integration enables stakeholders to synchronize the sequence and scope of a planned response in terms of roles and responsibilities, place, and time to a catastrophic incident. Catastrophic incidents include those that are defined in the National Planning Scenarios,¹⁴ which represent examples of the gravest dangers facing the United States, including terrorist attacks and natural disasters, and have been accorded the highest priority for federal planning efforts.

FEMA and DOD Each Play a Role in Emergency Response

FEMA's primary mission is to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters, by leading and supporting the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation.¹⁵ As described in the National Response Framework, planning is one of six activities essential to preparing for an incident. Other activities include training; equipping; exercising; and evaluating and improving to build tribal, local, state, regional, and national capabilities necessary to respond to any type of disaster.

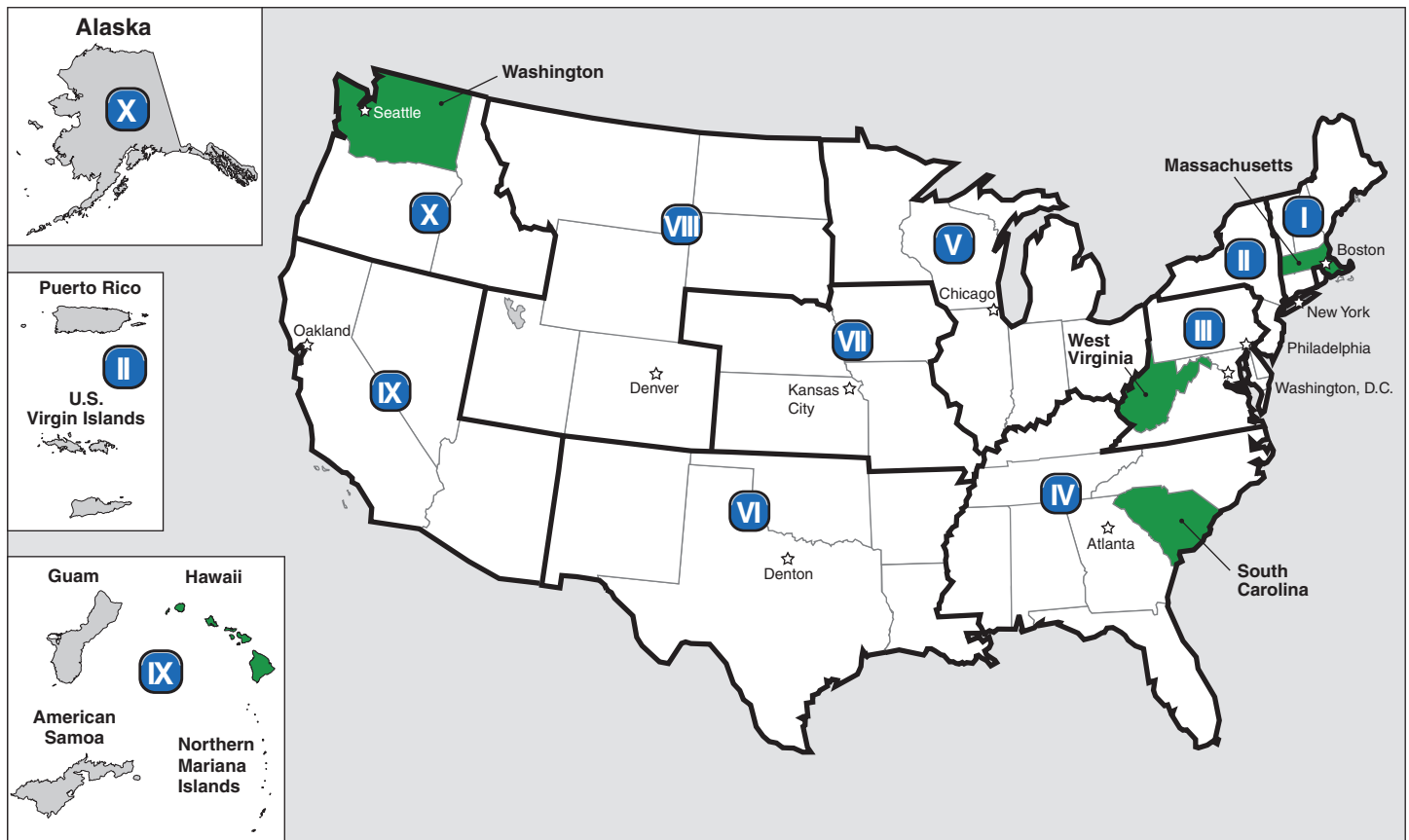
¹³ In 2009, FEMA published CPG 101 that provides general guidelines on developing emergency operations plans. It promotes a common understanding of the fundamentals of planning and decision making to help operations planners examine a hazard or threat and produce integrated, coordinated, and synchronized plans. This guide helps emergency and homeland security managers in state, territorial, tribal, and local governments in their efforts to develop and maintain viable all-hazard emergency plans. FEMA recommends that organizations responsible for developing emergency operations plans use CPG 101 to guide their efforts.

¹⁴ DHS's all-hazards National Planning Scenarios are an integral part of the department's capabilities-based approach to implementing *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8: National Preparedness*. The scenarios serve as the foundation for the development of homeland security tasks, target capabilities, and standards and performance metrics.

¹⁵ FEMA's mission is outlined in 6 U.S.C. § 313(b)(1).

As shown in figure 2, FEMA has 10 regional offices nationwide. Each region serves several states, and FEMA regional personnel work generally with the states to help plan for disasters, develop mitigation programs, and meet other needs when major disasters occur. Regional office locations are starred in the figure below, and in some cases are located within a pilot state.

Figure 2: Location of TFER Pilot States within FEMA Regions



Source: FEMA; Map Resources (map).

U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) are the combatant commands charged with carrying out DOD's domestic civil support mission, which involves responding to the needs of 56 separate and often unique state and territorial governments. Additionally, NORTHCOM and PACOM coordinate with numerous federal agencies that also have roles in planning for and responding to a variety of

incidents in the homeland. As part of the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, both NORTHCOM and PACOM have established Defense Coordinating Officers with staff to serve as DOD representatives to civilian authorities in the 10 FEMA regions.¹⁶ Defense Coordinating Officers are full-time senior-level military officers who provide liaison support and requirements validation, and they serve as single points of contact for state, tribal, local, and other federal authorities that need DOD support. In that way they are able to develop relationships with civilian authorities and gain an understanding of civilian capabilities so that DOD will know what, if anything, it may be called upon to provide in the event of a disaster or other incident. Additional defense resources include Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers who are senior Reserve officers that are expected to assist the Defense Coordinating Officers in coordinating the provision of military personnel, equipment, and supplies to support the emergency relief and cleanup efforts of civilian authorities.¹⁷ When NORTHCOM and PACOM are called upon to support civilian authorities, in most cases support will be localized, limited, and specific. When the scope of the disaster is reduced to the point where the primary federal agency can again assume full control and management without military assistance, NORTHCOM and PACOM will withdraw.

¹⁶ NORTHCOM has designated 10 Defense Coordinating Officers with staff, one in each of the 10 FEMA regions. However, since FEMA Region IX is located in both NORTHCOM and PACOM, NORTHCOM has a Defense Coordinating Officer assigned to the FEMA regional office in California and PACOM has established two Defense Coordinating Officers of its own, one under the Army for the state of Hawaii and the territory of American Samoa, and one under the Navy for the territories of Guam and the Northern Marianas. Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are part of FEMA Region II and are covered by the NORTHCOM Defense Coordinating Officer for Region II.

¹⁷ In March 2010, we reported that the ability of Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to coordinate and provide DOD capabilities to civil authorities may be limited because DOD has not delineated the roles, responsibilities, and command and control relationships between the Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. DOD officials told us that there is confusion between the military services and the Defense Coordinating Officers regarding the proper employment of Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. DOD concurred with the findings in our report. GAO, *Homeland Defense: DOD Can Enhance Efforts to Identify Capabilities to Support Civil Authorities during Disasters*, [GAO-10-368](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 30, 2010).

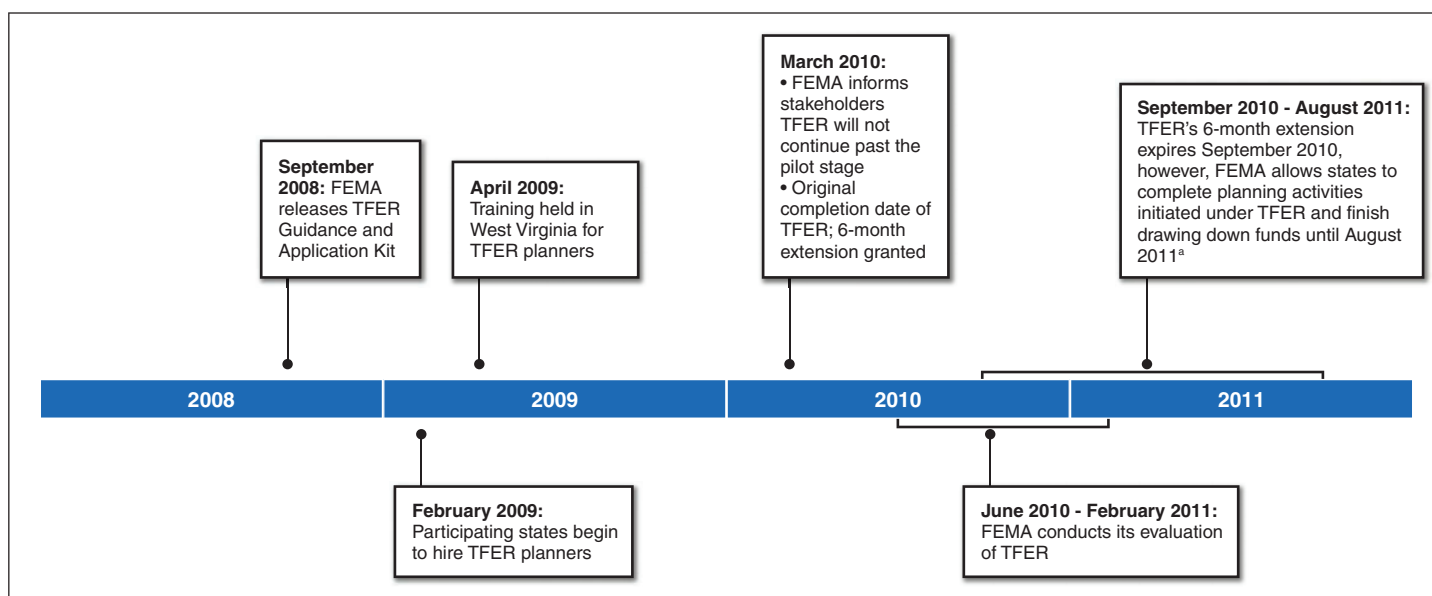
DOD Envisioned TFER, but FEMA Implemented the Pilot Program

The TFER pilot program was first envisioned by senior DOD leadership to address the National Planning Scenarios through supporting and strengthening the catastrophic disaster preparedness of individual states. However, since DOD is always a supporting agency when responding to catastrophic events in the homeland, DOD leadership did not think it was appropriate for DOD to administer the pilot program, and FEMA administered and funded the pilot program. Although FEMA administered TFER, pilot program guidance stated that the TFER program was to place a special emphasis on coordination and integration between the pilot states, FEMA, and DOD. Further, a key measure of achievement in the pilot program is the degree to which DOD stakeholders are integrated as full partners in the development of states' plans.

FEMA designed TFER to help assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning across state and local agencies and the private sector, as well as achieve a fuller integration of state planning efforts with federal agency partners through a deliberate blending of civil-military planning expertise. The TFER pilot program centered on the creation and employment of a dedicated planning team. Specifically, the planning team was to synchronize catastrophic planning efforts at the respective state, regional, and federal levels; prepare planning documents; identify gaps in capabilities; and assist in the overall organization, administration, and improvement of the states' catastrophic preparedness planning capacity. The three objectives of TFER are to (1) develop plans, (2) build relationships, and (3) document lessons learned.

FEMA designed TFER to run 18 months, beginning on September 1, 2008, and ending on March 31, 2010. The pilot program was extended another 6 months to September 30, 2010—for a total time of 2 years—to allow states more time to accomplish their planning goals. As shown in figure 3, FEMA announced in March 2010 that TFER would not continue past the pilot stage, but allowed the pilot states to draw down the remaining TFER funds and continue to complete initiatives started under TFER through August 2011.

Figure 3: Timeline of TFER-related Activities



Source: GAO analysis of FEMA data.

^aFEMA's grant extension to the TFER pilot states extended the period of performance for the grant, meaning states could continue to draw down TFER funding and work on catastrophic planning activities.

FEMA limited the pilot program to five states, each of which received \$200,000 in the first year of the pilot program, and an additional \$150,000 for the remainder of the program, for overall program funds totaling \$1.75 million. It selected applicants to achieve a representative cross-section of geographic differences, FEMA regions, threat of catastrophic events, state emergency management structures, and participation in a separate FEMA catastrophic planning grant.¹⁸ As discussed in appendix II, FEMA provides funds to states and localities for catastrophic planning through other grant programs. For example, FEMA's State Homeland Security Program provides funding that may be used for planning efforts that enable states

¹⁸ FEMA selected four states that receive funds through the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program—Hawaii, Massachusetts, Washington, and West Virginia. South Carolina does not receive funds through this grant and served as a comparison state. The Regional Catastrophic Planning Grants Program is intended to enhance catastrophic incident preparedness in selected high-risk, high-consequence urban areas and their surrounding regions.

to prioritize needs, build capabilities, update preparedness strategies, allocate resources, and deliver preparedness programs across disciplines and levels of government.

FEMA administers the pilot program within its National Preparedness Directorate.¹⁹ This directorate is responsible for overseeing the coordination and development of strategies necessary to prepare for all hazards. As part of this mission, the National Preparedness Directorate is to provide policy and planning guidance, training and exercises, and technical assistance that builds prevention, protection, response, and recovery capabilities.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, FEMA began to address the challenges revealed by its response. FEMA's 2006 Nationwide Plan Review highlighted the need for fundamental planning modernization and observed, among other things, that: catastrophic planning efforts were unsystematic and uneven; planning expertise was insufficient for catastrophic incidents; and collaboration requirements were not well-defined, fostering a tendency to plan internally. In addition, according to FEMA, the 2006 Nationwide Plan Review revealed that 95 percent of state and urban area participants cited the need for federally funded planning support and technical assistance. FEMA also reported that in 2007, states and urban areas ranked planning among their highest grant funding priorities.²⁰ The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General recently reported that while progress has been made, the National Preparedness Directorate needs more effective coordination with state, local, and tribal governments.²¹ Our prior work on FEMA, and specifically the National Preparedness Directorate, has highlighted the need for strategic planning that identifies outcomes and performance measures for

¹⁹ The National Preparedness Directorate also administers the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grants Program. FEMA's Grant Program Directorate is responsible for administering all of the other FEMA preparedness grant programs.

²⁰ In July 2010, FEMA issued an update to the Nationwide Plan Review in which it reported that the state of national planning had substantially improved (e.g., states and urban areas reported updating their basic plans and increased confidence in planning for catastrophic events) and much had been accomplished to address the recommendations and findings from the 2006 review.

²¹ DHS, Office of Inspector General, OIG-10-123, *FEMA's Preparedness for the Next Catastrophic Disaster - An Update* (Washington, D.C., Sep. 27, 2010).

the Directorate's programs.²² In October 2010, we also reported that since April 2009, FEMA has made limited progress in assessing preparedness capabilities and has not yet developed national preparedness capability requirements based on established metrics to provide a framework for these assessments.²³ We reported that until such a framework is in place, FEMA will not have a basis to operationalize and implement its conceptual approach for assessing local, state, and federal preparedness capabilities against capability requirements to identify gaps for prioritizing investments in national preparedness. FEMA responded that it has made much progress since 2009 in meeting its legislative requirements and highlighted some of its specific achievements, such as the establishment of a working group to help consolidate and streamline reporting requirements for state, tribal, and local stakeholders.

²² See, GAO, *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning, Exercise, and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009); *Emergency Preparedness: FEMA Faces Challenges Integrating Community Preparedness Programs into Its Strategic Approach*, [GAO-10-193](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 29, 2010).

²³ See, GAO, *FEMA Capabilities Assessments: FEMA Has Made Limited Progress in Efforts to Develop and Implement a System to Assess National Preparedness Capabilities*, [GAO-11-51R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 29, 2010).

FEMA Implemented Some, but Not All Elements of Sound Management Practices in Its Administration of the TFER Pilot Program, and Does Not Have Policy Guidance on Developing Pilot Programs

FEMA developed program objectives and a data collection plan—elements of sound management practices—but did not implement other elements of sound management practices, such as documenting standards for determining the program’s success and did not always follow its stated processes and procedures for TFER. Further, FEMA does not have agencywide policy guidance for FEMA program managers to follow when developing pilot programs. In November 2008, we reported that pilot programs can more effectively inform future program rollout when sound management practices are followed.²⁴ Consistent with best practices in program management,²⁵ our guide for designing evaluations,²⁶ and our prior work, we identified sound management practices to design a pilot, to guide consistent implementation of a pilot, and to conduct analysis of the results. Our assessment of FEMA’s implementation of sound management practices for TFER is shown in table 1.

²⁴ See, GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Strengthen Its Approach for Evaluating the SRFMI Data-Sharing Pilot Program*, [GAO-09-45](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 7, 2008). Specifically, in [GAO-09-45](#) we reported that a sound, well-developed and documented evaluation plan includes, at a minimum: (1) well-defined, clear, and measurable objectives; (2) criteria or standards for determining pilot-program performance; (3) clearly articulated methodology, including sound sampling methods, determination of appropriate sample size for the evaluation design, and a strategy for comparing the pilot results with other efforts; (4) a clear plan that details the type and source of data necessary to evaluate the pilot, methods for data collection, and the timing and frequency of data collection; and (5) a data analysis plan to track the program’s performance and evaluate the final results of the project.

²⁵ See, for example, P.H. Rossi, M.W. Lipsey, and H.E. Freeman, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: 2004); and the Project Management Institute. *The Standard for Program Management*® (Newton Square, Pa: 2006). Specifically, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* covers evaluation research activities used in appraising the design, implementation, effectiveness, and efficiency of social programs. Also, *The Standard for Program Management* describes program phases to facilitate program governance, enhanced control, and coordination of program and project resources and overall risk management.

²⁶ See, GAO, *Designing Evaluations*, [GAO/PEMD-10.1.4](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 1991).

Table 1: GAO Assessment of FEMA’s Implementation of Sound Management Practices for TFER

Sound management practice	GAO assessment
1. Develop objectives that link to the goals of the program and clearly articulate standards for determining pilot-program performance	FEMA developed objectives for the states to follow that reflected TFER’s goals but did not document the standards for determining whether TFER was successful.
2. Develop processes and procedures for approving, reporting, and monitoring and provide program support	FEMA specified support it would provide to the pilot program and procedures to monitor the pilot, but did not always follow these procedures.
3. Develop and implement a data collection and data analysis plan	FEMA developed elements of a data collection plan, but did not always ensure data collection tools would produce reliable results. Further, FEMA did not develop a data analysis plan to describe how it would track TFER’s performance and evaluate its effectiveness.
4. Ensure evaluation results are communicated to stakeholders	FEMA has not yet decided whether, how, or when the TFER evaluation results will be shared with stakeholders.

Source: GAO analysis of sound management practices and FEMA information.

FEMA Developed Objectives that Reflect the Goals of the Pilot Program, but Did Not Document Standards for Determining Pilot Program Success

FEMA developed objectives for the pilot states to follow, but did not document standards for determining whether TFER was successful. According to sound management practices, having objectives that reflect the goals of the pilot program can help determine whether the objectives of the pilot have been met. FEMA outlined three objectives for the TFER pilot program—develop plans, build relationships, and document lessons learned—and these objectives reflect TFER’s goals. For example, the “develop plans” and “document lessons learned” objectives reflect the goals of TFER because achieving these objectives may help assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning—a stated TFER goal. Further, achieving the “build relationships” objective may enhance the stated TFER goal of integrating state planning efforts with those of federal agency partners. However, FEMA did not define how states’ implementation of the objectives would impact the decision to extend or end TFER. According to sound program management practices, defining standards for determining pilot-program performance is necessary to determine what success level is appropriate for judging the pilot program’s effect. The TFER program manager said that discussions about the expectations for TFER were held at a high level with senior leadership from FEMA, DOD, and the participating states, such as the Adjutants General, before TFER planners were hired. However, FEMA did

not include the standards resulting from these conversations in the TFER program guidance. The program manager said that the agency had a limited time frame in which to design the pilot and that if he were to design the TFER pilot now, he would build language into the grant guidance that included standards for measuring performance. By clearly defining standards for determining program performance, FEMA would be better positioned to determine whether TFER enhanced states' catastrophic planning, as well as achieved a fuller integration of state planning efforts with federal agency partners through a deliberate blending of civil-military expertise.

FEMA Outlined Steps to Administer TFER, but Did Not Always Adhere to Its Processes and Procedures

FEMA outlined steps for administering TFER, which aligns with sound management practices, but FEMA did not always adhere to the processes and procedures it developed for the pilot. Sound management practices include developing processes and procedures for approving, reporting, and monitoring and providing program support. Further, according to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, such control activities are an integral part of an entity's planning, implementing, reviewing, and accountability for stewardship of government resources and achieving effective results. FEMA outlined steps in two key documents, the TFER Guidance and Application Kit and the TFER Pilot Information Package in which FEMA described the support it would provide the participating states and the procedures for monitoring the program.

FEMA developed processes and procedures for providing funding, training, holding a meeting with the pilot states, and approving state project management plans that met certain requirements, and establishing a mechanism for sharing lessons learned among the states, but FEMA did not fully follow the steps it outlined. For example, FEMA provided \$1.75 million in funds to the state administrative agencies identified in the TFER Pilot Information Package and established a virtual communication tool for the TFER pilot states to communicate and share lessons learned. However, FEMA provided training for the initial cohort of TFER planners in April 2009, which FEMA officials told us consisted of two-thirds of the planners originally hired by the states. All five states found FEMA's training useful. However, officials in two states told us additional training would have been useful. For example, one TFER planner who was not hired at the time of the training stated that additional training could have provided planners more opportunities to network and gain knowledge about state and federal resources. Further, FEMA conducted a meeting with the pilot states to accomplish tasks such as establishing support

requirements and planning deliverables, but FEMA approved three state project management plans that did not contain all the recommended information, such as specific tasks, milestones, and deliverables. The TFER program manager stated that part of the intent of TFER was to design it in real time, working with the jurisdictions, and that the omissions of the recommended information did not negatively impact the states' implementation of TFER. However, the states whose project management plans did not include specific deliverables have not completed draft plans.

Further, FEMA also established processes and procedures for reporting and monitoring, but did not fully follow them. Specifically, FEMA stated in the TFER Pilot Information Package that the project manager would conduct biweekly conference calls with the states, but state officials in all five pilot states noted that FEMA headquarters involvement was inconsistent. According to the program manager, the purpose of these meetings was to ensure the pilot was functioning smoothly, so FEMA conducted biweekly meetings as TFER became operational but the meetings were discontinued once the pilots were underway. However, officials in four states reported that it would have been helpful if FEMA had provided more guidance on plan development. Further, TFER planners in one state reported that the lack of guidance made it more difficult to write plans. Another planner stated that FEMA did not provide the expected level of meetings and technical assistance. The program manager stated he was available to provide the states with assistance as needed throughout the pilot program. In addition, FEMA established reporting requirements and a plan to conduct a 6-month evaluation. For example, the states submitted reports to FEMA—to include the status of milestones and deliverables—but the program manager told us he did not review all of these reports because not all of these reports were submitted to his office. As a result, the program manager could not monitor progress in meeting milestones and completing deliverables. FEMA also conducted a 6-month evaluation of the pilot program, but four pilot states reported that FEMA did not provide feedback on the evaluation. According to sound management practices, continuous monitoring can be a useful tool for facilitating effective management by providing regular feedback about how well a program is performing its functions. This type of feedback allows managers to take corrective action when problems arise and can also provide stakeholders with regular assessments of program performance. By adhering to the steps outlined in TFER documents, FEMA could have more effectively monitored the pilot program to better ensure that the states receive the level of guidance and support they

identified as beneficial in order to enhance their TFER catastrophic planning efforts.

FEMA Took Steps to Collect and Analyze Data from States to Evaluate TFER, but Did Not Always Include Elements of Sound Management Practices

FEMA developed a data collection plan but did not reliably collect data for the pilot evaluation, and FEMA did not develop a data analysis plan to describe how it would track TFER's performance and evaluate its effectiveness based on standards to determine program performance. For example, FEMA developed elements of a data collection plan, following sound management practices such as detailing the type of data necessary to monitor and evaluate the pilot and identifying the timing and frequency of data collection. Further, FEMA's data collection plan followed reporting requirements specified in its program documents for TFER participants, and also included a data collection tool for evaluation of the pilot, presented in appendix III. However, FEMA did not always identify the source that was to collect the data. Sound management practices say that the source of data should be specified in the data collection plan, and according to program evaluation guidance, the reliability of evaluations can vary depending on who responds. During interviews with officials from participating states and FEMA regional offices, we found inconsistencies in who completed the evaluation questions. For example, two pilot states developed their own responses and three FEMA regions developed the responses for their respective pilot states, even though one of the questions explicitly asked for the opinion of state stakeholders. Further, two of the three states were not cognizant of the fact that their FEMA regional offices had completed the evaluation questions; therefore, these states' views may not have been accurately captured in the evaluation responses. Moreover, officials in one FEMA regional office questioned whether they were the appropriate FEMA personnel to administer the evaluation questions, since FEMA headquarters had collected all prior information from the states. Collecting data from consistent sources across the five pilot states could have better positioned FEMA to ensure the data were reliable and compare responses across states in order to draw conclusions about states' experiences in the pilot program.

Further, FEMA did not collect information to determine whether all of the pilot program objectives were fully met. Specifically, FEMA changed some of the data collection questions it provided the states in the TFER Pilot

Information Package when it released updated questions in the TFER Evaluation Criteria document.²⁷ For example, FEMA used the same three objectives in both its original and updated documents, and its objectives on developing plans and documenting lessons learned objectives were consistent across documents, but FEMA did not collect information to assess all of the relationships it identified as important for its objective on building relationships in the TFER Pilot Information Package. For instance, FEMA did not evaluate coordination with FEMA, Defense Coordinating Officers, or Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers—all relationships principal to implementing TFER, according to the TFER Pilot Information Package document. FEMA included a question that asked the pilot states which federal agencies they coordinated with, but did not include any question that would allow it to evaluate the extent to which coordination occurred with these stakeholders. As a result, the evaluation responses we reviewed listed the stakeholders they coordinated with but did not discuss the extent of coordination between state officials and stakeholders.²⁸ FEMA officials said that because the Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer positions were not the only relationships explored between states and federal agencies, the evaluation criteria was changed to make it more general to determine with which agencies the TFER states engaged. However, by changing the evaluation question to a general and descriptive question on federal relationships, it will be difficult for FEMA to determine if the states achieved a fuller integration of planning efforts with federal agency partners—one of the goals of TFER.

FEMA did not develop a data analysis plan to describe how it would track TFER's performance and evaluate its effectiveness based on criteria to determine program performance. According to sound management practices, a data analysis plan sets out who will do the analysis and when and how data will be analyzed to measure the pilot program's performance. FEMA did not finalize a data-analysis methodology describing how FEMA would use information collected from the states to evaluate TFER until after it collected responses to FEMA's evaluation criteria questions. The TFER program manager stated that FEMA plans to

²⁷ FEMA described the general objectives and proposed criteria in its December 2008 TFER Pilot Information Package document and provided more specifics in its June 2010 TFER Evaluation Criteria document.

²⁸ We reviewed evaluation responses from two of the pilot states.

look for trends in the states' responses to the evaluation questions to discern common threads and outliers. According to the program manager, FEMA did not develop a plan that outlined the overall approach it would use to analyze the TFER data during design of the pilot program because the pilot was not intended to produce quantitative results. He further stated that FEMA wanted to see what worked and what did not work as the pilot evolved. However, a data analysis plan could have helped guide the analysis of the qualitative data FEMA collected from the pilot states and FEMA regional offices. Developing data collection and data analysis plans following sound management practices to establish a methodology for collecting and evaluating the pilot's results could have provided FEMA with reasonable assurance that it possessed the data and performance information needed to draw reasonable conclusions on the impact of TFER.

The TFER program manager told us he is analyzing the data collected for TFER to draw conclusions regarding the pilot program, but FEMA officials stated that TFER would not be continued past the pilot stage. The information on the TFER pilot program's evaluation stated that the results of the evaluation would determine the prospect for the program's continuation and level of future funding. However, prior to conducting its evaluation of the pilot, FEMA announced in March 2010 that TFER would not be continued as a stand-alone grant program. According to FEMA officials, the decision to discontinue TFER as a stand-alone grant program was made because DOD may begin a similar initiative and states could allocate other FEMA grant funding for catastrophic planning purposes. Specifically, the TFER program manager noted that the National Guard Homeland Response Force, which is a DOD concept that would place National Guard personnel in each FEMA region, could continue the planning efforts associated with TFER.²⁹ DOD officials stated that these personnel would be located regionally and not in individual states; therefore, the National Guard Homeland Response Force initiative could supplement but not replace a TFER-like initiative. Also, according to DOD, the National Guard Homeland Response Force would have as its mission

²⁹ According to a September 2010 report, "the purpose of these personnel is to provide a regional response capability; focus on planning, training and exercising; and forge strong links between the federal level and state and local authorities." *Before Disaster Strikes: Imperatives for Enhancing Defense Support to Civil Authorities*. Advisory Panel to Department of Defense Capabilities for Support of Civil Authorities After Certain Incidents (Sept. 15, 2010).

response to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-explosive incidents and would not have a broad purview like TFER. A FEMA assistant administrator also said that FEMA made the decision to not continue TFER due to changing budget conditions and to focus on its legislative and presidential directive mandates. Other FEMA grant programs available for catastrophic planning are discussed in appendix II.

FEMA Has Not Committed to Sharing the TFER Evaluation Results with Stakeholders

According to the TFER program manager, FEMA leadership will make a decision on whether and how the results of the evaluation are disseminated after the program office finishes the evaluation of TFER.³⁰ According to sound management practices, results and recommendations that emerge from evaluations must be disseminated in ways that meet the needs of stakeholders. The TFER program manager stated it is not his decision whether the results of the pilot's evaluation will be shared. According to the TFER program manager, FEMA leadership will make a decision on whether and how the results of the evaluation are disseminated after the program office finishes the evaluation of TFER. FEMA administered the TFER pilot program, but other key stakeholders in federal disaster response, such as the pilot states and DOD, could benefit from the results of FEMA's evaluation of the TFER pilot program. Disseminating the results, recommendations, and lessons learned from the TFER pilot could assist future state catastrophic planning efforts, whether they be led by FEMA, DOD, another federal agency, or a state.

FEMA Does Not Have Clear Policy Guidance on Designing, Administering, and Evaluating Pilot Programs

FEMA's Office of Policy and Program Analysis reported that FEMA does not have a directive on how to design, administer, and evaluate a pilot program. In the absence of this, FEMA does not have a systematic approach for designing, administering, and evaluating such programs. The program manager stated there are no formal guidelines for developing FEMA grants. We previously reported that FEMA faced methodological challenges in assessing capabilities and has not generated meaningful

³⁰ In January 2011, FEMA said the evaluation would be completed in February 2011, but as of March 2011 FEMA had not completed its evaluation of TFER.

preparedness information from data collected from pilot programs.³¹ *Standards for Internal Controls in the Federal Government* state that management is responsible for ensuring that detailed policies, procedures, and practices are developed and built into and are an integral part of operations.³² These elements, which are an integral part of an agency's ability to ensure accountability and achieve effective results, need to be clearly documented to help ensure that management directives are carried out as intended. By developing and implementing policy guidance that includes sound management practices, FEMA could be better positioned to ensure its pilot programs meet their intended goals.

All Pilot States Have Made Progress in Addressing the Pilot Program Objectives, but No State Has Fully Addressed All Three Objectives

All five states have taken steps to follow FEMA's TFER Information Package and TFER Evaluation Criteria document to address the TFER pilot program's three objectives—develop plans, build relationships, and document lessons learned—and these efforts are ongoing.³³ First, of the four states committed to developing plans, two states have completed draft plans, and TFER planners in all states reported using FEMA's CPG 101 planning process to develop initiatives that fill gaps in state catastrophic planning. Second, all five states built relationships with stakeholders, including FEMA and state agencies, but coordination with DOD—specifically, with the Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers—was limited. Third, all states documented lessons learned from the pilot program, which included the benefit of dedicated funding for catastrophic planning, and establishing longer time frames for states to complete the planning process. However, these efforts are ongoing as four states continue to spend TFER funds.

³¹ See, GAO, *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning, Exercise, and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009). For example, the National Preparedness System was piloted in 10 states and discontinued because it was time consuming and did not produce meaningful data. In response to our recommendations, FEMA said it has established a working group to help consolidate and streamline reporting requirements for state, tribal, and local stakeholders.

³² GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (November 1999).

³³ FEMA announced it is not continuing TFER past the pilot stage, but states continue to draw down remaining funds and complete activities initiated under TFER.

Two of Five States Have Made Substantial Progress in Developing Plans, and TFER Planners in All States Reported Using FEMA's Planning Process to Develop Initiatives that Fill Gaps in State Catastrophic Planning

TFER Objective 1: Develop Plans

Assessing a state's progress in this objective was based on efforts made to address the following components, among others:

- Description of efforts to integrate plans with state and federal partners
- Planning that reflects the National Preparedness Guidelines
- Planning responsive to the National Planning Scenarios and other threats based on the state's all-hazards risk assessment
- Planning consistent and integrated with the state's emergency plans
- Development of actual plans

Source: GAO application of FEMA criteria.

Four of the states are developing plans and all five pilot states reported they are using the planning process outlined in FEMA's CPG 101. However, two of the four states developing plans have not completed them. The fifth state is focusing on other planning initiatives. FEMA articulated the criteria for this objective in the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document, which focused on organizing plans according to CPG 101 and plan development. Based on audit work conducted in the TFER pilot states, we assessed the states' progress based on these criteria, and concluded that two of the states have made substantial progress in fulfilling the FEMA objective on developing plans, and the other three have made some progress, as shown in figure 4. Figure 4 further explains this assessment, as well as appendix IV, which provides specific information regarding each pilot state's TFER initiatives and progress made towards meeting FEMA's objectives for TFER.

Figure 4: Assessment of Pilot States' Plan Development Through an Effective Planning Process, as of March 2011^a

State	GAO assessment	Status
Hawaii	○	State officials reported that TFER planning integrates with the state's existing hurricane planning efforts, which relates to a National Planning Scenario. State officials told us that TFER planners are following the steps outlined in CPG 101, but have not completed the full cycle of planning steps for its plans, as Hawaii has not completed draft plans.
Massachusetts	○	Massachusetts focused on initiatives pertaining to a hurricane and other priorities identified by state emergency management officials and TFER planners. However, state officials told us only one of the initiatives specifically pertained to a National Planning Scenario. State officials said the planners followed the steps outlined in CPG 101, but could not complete the full cycle of planning because state officials decided that the Massachusetts TFER planners would coordinate the planning efforts but plans would be completed by other state agencies.
South Carolina	●	South Carolina focused on the National Planning Scenarios related to terrorist attacks. The state has completed a revision of its Catastrophic Incident Annex and it has completed drafts of its Terrorism Prevention and Response Plan and three other plans related to terrorist attacks, which officials told us fill gaps in state planning. Planners reported they are following the steps outlined in CPG 101, but have not finished the full cycle of planning for any of its plans, as South Carolina has not exercised them.
Washington	●	Washington selected as its primary National Planning Scenario a catastrophic earthquake and accompanying tsunami. Washington integrated TFER logistics plans and a catastrophic incident plan with existing state plans and filled gaps in the state plan compendium, according to state officials. The state has finalized two of its seven plans and has final drafts for three others. Washington officials told us they are following CPG 101 planning process and are structuring plan content accordingly.
West Virginia	○	West Virginia identified three possible scenarios: a chemical incident, a mass evacuation of the National Capital Region, and a dam failure. These events could be caused by a hurricane or terrorist attack, which pertain to several National Planning Scenarios. According to state officials, West Virginia's TFER planning efforts fill gaps in catastrophic planning and include development of a catastrophic incident plan. State officials said that planners are following the steps outlined in CPG 101, but have not finished the full cycle of planning for any of its products, as West Virginia has not completed draft plans.

- Substantial progress
- Some progress
- Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

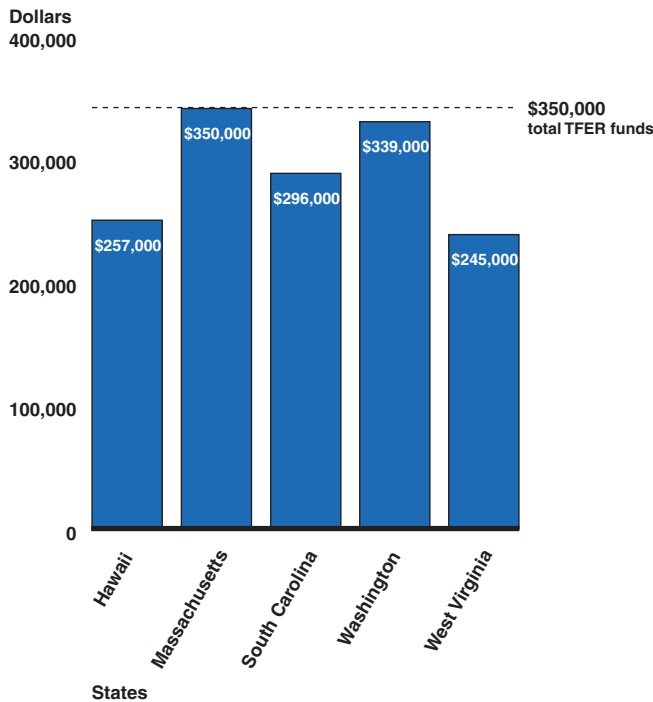
^aThe GAO assessment was assigned based on an average of five components, as discussed in appendix I and elaborated in appendix IV.

Developing plans. The status of the states' TFER plans varies; Washington and South Carolina have completed some but not all of their plans, while Hawaii and West Virginia have not completed any draft plans. Hawaii and West Virginia officials identified reasons for not having completed draft plans, including delays in hiring qualified planners. One of FEMA's requirements for TFER was that planners have experience in conducting civil-military support planning and operations with the National Guard and/or military experience. In Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Washington, all planners initially hired for TFER had military backgrounds. These states hired planners as early as February 2009—5 months after the pilot program began. One of the planners initially hired had prior military and civilian experience, and the other had a logistics

background.³⁴ Hawaii hired its first TFER planner in April 2009 but did not hire a second planner until August 2009—11 months after the pilot began. Hawaii officials told us that they found it difficult to hire qualified individuals with a military background because better paying options exist in the state for qualified individuals. One of Hawaii’s two current planners does not have military experience, but state officials told us that the individual is qualified because of his information technology background, which was needed to support logistics planning. Additionally, he worked for the state planning agency. West Virginia officials reported that they hired their planners in the July/August 2009 time frame—10 to 11 months after the pilot began. Two applicants originally applied for the position, one of which West Virginia hired. This individual did not have a military background, but officials stated he was qualified based on his decades of experience as a first responder. West Virginia subsequently hired a National Guardsman. The West Virginia TFER supervisor stated that inadequate planning capacity at the local level also delayed TFER efforts because West Virginia TFER focused on building capacity at the local level. FEMA granted all five states a 6-month extension based on delays the states experienced. As previously discussed, planning continues in four states, as they are still spending TFER funds, as of March 2011 (see fig. 5).

³⁴ This second planner worked from August 2009 to February 2010.

Figure 5: TFER Funds Spent by State, as of March 2011



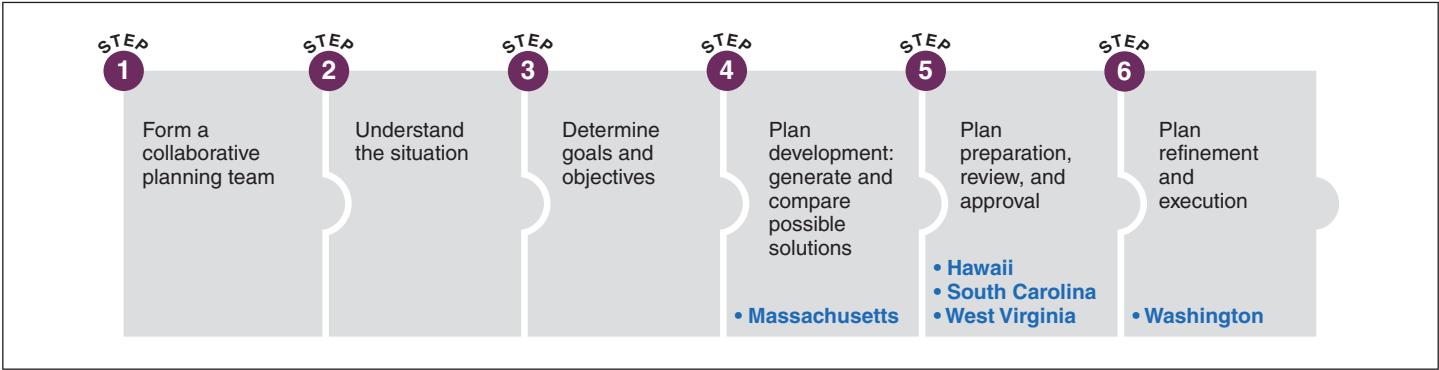
Source: GAO analysis of state-provided data.

Massachusetts TFER planners facilitated planning between different levels of government, but other state planners are developing the plans. Massachusetts initially focused on contributing to Boston's improvised explosive device planning efforts, but differences in time lines, combined with TFER's brief performance period, caused the team to change its focus to facilitating collaborative emergency planning among federal, state, local, and private stakeholders. For example, the Massachusetts TFER planners facilitated collaborative planning among the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and FEMA to create a statewide medical support plan. TFER planners developed interagency relationships and helped the planning team select goals and objectives but did not draft the plan, which state officials said other state planners are developing. State officials decided the TFER planners would not actually write the plans because of the pilot program's short time frame.

Filling gaps in state planning. State officials reported that TFER initiatives fill gaps in existing state plans. For example, South Carolina, Washington, and West Virginia chose to work on a catastrophic incident plan as part of their TFER efforts, and this plan is an annex to the states’ basic emergency operations plan. Further, officials in four of five states reported that TFER initiatives focused on gaps not addressed by other planning initiatives. For example, the FEMA Region X TFER contact stated that Washington successfully integrated TFER with the Regional Catastrophic Grant Planning Program. Two of three West Virginia TFER scenarios pertain in part to scenarios addressed by other planning efforts, but officials stated that TFER planners work collaboratively with the planners involved in these other efforts, as described in appendix IV. Additionally, Hawaii officials anticipate the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program will address hurricanes in 2011—before the state exhausts its TFER funds. State officials expect these efforts to be complementary.

FEMA’s planning process. All five states reported that they are following FEMA’s planning process, and states that developed draft plans utilized the structure recommended in FEMA’s CPG 101 (see fig. 6). All of the states reported they are following FEMA’s six-step planning process, but they are in different stages of that process, as of March 2011.

Figure 6: Furthest Step Each Pilot State Achieved in the CPG 101 Planning Process, as of March 2011



Source: GAO analysis of Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101 and interviews with state officials.

Washington has exercised three out of seven of its plans—part of step six. However, most of Washington’s plans remain in draft form, which is associated with step five. Since Hawaii, South Carolina, and West Virginia officials told us their states have not exercised any plans, they are in step

five—the step where planners write the plan and the plan is approved. Massachusetts state officials decided that their pilot program would coordinate planning efforts, but that other state planners would develop plans; officials stated they did not move beyond step four in the planning process.

Officials in the four states that committed to developing plans reported that they are structuring plans as recommended by CPG 101, but some sections are not included in the states' draft plans. CPG 101 provides a recommended structure for annexes to a state's basic emergency operations plan.³⁵ These annexes comprise half of the 32 TFER initiatives spanning all five pilot states. Ten of 13 annexes we reviewed were missing at least one recommended section.³⁶ For example, none of the three catastrophic incident plans we reviewed contain a section on direction, control, and coordination. South Carolina and Washington officials noted that their plans did not include all of the recommended sections because other state plans like the basic emergency operations plan contained these sections. Washington officials further stated that TFER-supported planning is part of the state emergency operations plan and is not designed to stand alone. Further, Hawaii officials told us that they are following the FEMA guidance, but its plans are incomplete and work is ongoing. West Virginia officials stated that it is following the structure recommended in CPG 101, but since some of the sections rely on information gathered at the county level, it will take about 5 years before the state has enough information to include each recommended section in its catastrophic incident plan. We were unable to further assess the content of the pilot states' plans because all but three of the plans TFER states are developing remain in draft form.

³⁵ CPG 101 recommends including the following sections in supporting annexes to the state basic emergency operations plan: purpose, situation overview, and planning assumptions; concept of operations; organization and assignment of responsibilities; direction, control, and coordination; information collection and dissemination; administration, finance, and logistics; and authorities and references.

³⁶ We were unable to review the other annexes because states were not at the point in the planning process to provide us with draft plans.

All Five States Made Progress in Building Relationships with Stakeholders such as FEMA and State Agencies, but Coordination with Federal Military Stakeholders Was Limited

TFER Objective 2: Build Relationships

Assessing a state’s progress in this objective was based on efforts made to address the following components:

- Planning that reflects the formation of integrated planning teams described in the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101
- Establishment or enhancement of mechanisms to ensure multijurisdictional and interagency planning coordination
- Plans coordinated with local, state, and federal agencies
- Full use of civil-military planning expertise to assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic planning
- Incorporation of private sector capabilities
- Coordination with other states
- Coordination with FEMA

Source: GAO application of FEMA criteria.

All five states participating in the TFER pilot program reported that they built relationships with stakeholders through collaborative planning teams and coordinated with various stakeholders. State officials told us they coordinated with FEMA, other state agencies, and the National Guard, but none of the states coordinated regularly with federal military stakeholders such as Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers as FEMA recommended in the TFER Pilot Information Package. FEMA articulated the criteria for this objective in the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document, which focused on forming planning teams and building relationships with relevant stakeholders. As discussed in figure 7, all five states have made some progress in building relationships with relevant stakeholders. Our assessment—based on audit work conducted in the TFER pilot states—is summarized in figure 7 and further explained below as well as in appendix IV, which provides specific information regarding each pilot state’s TFER initiatives and progress made towards this objective.

Figure 7: Assessment of Pilot States’ Progress in Building Relationships with Stakeholders, as of March 2011^a

State	GAO assessment	Status
Hawaii		Hawaii developed planning teams that included state agencies and relevant stakeholders, but state officials told us they had little contact with DOD entities.
Massachusetts		Massachusetts TFER planners helped formulate planning teams that worked to improve the state’s catastrophic preparedness, and included planners from state agencies, as well as relevant stakeholders. State officials told us that contact with DOD entities was minimal.
South Carolina		South Carolina inserted its TFER planners into existing planning teams in its law enforcement and emergency management divisions that also included other state agencies and relevant stakeholders. According to state officials, TFER planners coordinated with the DOD entities, but this coordination was limited.
Washington		Washington officials stated they developed planning teams that included planners from state agencies, and relevant stakeholders. According to state officials, DOD entities were minimally involved.
West Virginia		West Virginia officials said they developed planning teams that included state agencies, the National Guard, and private sector stakeholders. State officials told us coordination with DOD entities was minimal.

- Substantial progress
- ◐ Some progress
- Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

^aThe GAO assessment was assigned based on an average of seven components, as discussed in appendix I and elaborated in appendix IV.

Four states reported that their TFER planning teams worked efficiently. One state, West Virginia, identified problems with its planning team. West Virginia officials told us they faced challenges coordinating and integrating plans with some stakeholders. For example, some state and local stakeholders resisted coordination and overestimated their planning capacities. All five pilot states included federal, state, local, and private stakeholders in the planning process, and utilized work groups to enhance these relationships.

All five states reported that they coordinated with FEMA and other states, but the level of coordination was inconsistent throughout the pilot. All states reported they benefited from coordination with FEMA headquarters in the beginning of the pilot through training and/or teleconferences. Further, four states identified their relationship to the FEMA region as beneficial during the pilot program. A TFER planner in the fifth state received some needed information from its region but the state's TFER program supervisor told us they coordinated infrequently and that regional support was inadequate. However, as previously discussed, all states reported that coordination with FEMA headquarters waned throughout the pilot. Further, Washington TFER planners coordinated with FEMA, but officials told us that coordination could be improved. Specifically, state officials reported that FEMA Region X participated in work groups and provided suggestions on planning, but FEMA headquarters provided limited guidance on the implementation of the pilot program, and grant guidance was inconsistent. According to FEMA's TFER program manager, FEMA headquarters was more involved at the beginning phase of the TFER to help set up the pilot program, but states needed less assistance after that point.

In addition to FEMA's guidance that TFER planners have experience in conducting civil-military support planning and operations with the National Guard and/or military experience, FEMA also encouraged TFER states to coordinate with National Guard and/or federal military entities throughout the pilot program. We found that all TFER states coordinated with the National Guard to varying degrees, but coordination with federal military entities was limited in all pilot states. In Massachusetts and West Virginia, state officials placed at least one TFER planner under National Guard management, which facilitated collaboration, according to state officials. In Hawaii and Washington, the state Adjutant General oversees both the National Guard and the state emergency management agency, which facilitated coordination. However, Hawaii and Washington officials stated that coordination with the National Guard was limited because of deployments. A TFER planner in South Carolina told us the state agencies

involved in TFER coordinated with National Guard officials on a monthly basis and included them in TFER workgroups. However, a South Carolina National Guard official told us the National Guard could have provided more input into the TFER products South Carolina produced.

FEMA's TFER Pilot Information Package recommended the pilot states include military entities as full partners in the planning process. At the onset of TFER, DOD provided training to planners and state officials on civil-military planning integration and how NORTHCOM could support TFER efforts. State officials in two states told us DOD officials were involved in TFER work groups and officials in another state reported that DOD officials provided them with contacts and information needed to develop their plans, but none of the states coordinated regularly with the federal military Defense Coordinating Officers or Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. In no instance did TFER pilot states ask Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers or Defense Coordinating Officers to help develop or comment on plans, according to state and DOD officials. DOD stakeholders are important in the planning process because DOD may be asked to provide response capabilities in the event of a catastrophic incident. State officials told us they needed to draft the plans first, before soliciting DOD's input. One of the Defense Coordinating Officers we spoke with agreed that there was little he could do to assist TFER states until the planners drafted plans. Further, state officials told us the availability of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers—part-time military personnel who work primarily on weekends—limited coordination with state officials and TFER planners. State officials and a Defense Coordinating Officer told us this work schedule is not conducive to frequent coordination between Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers and state officials, who work during the week. Further, DOD officials in two regions stated that DOD entities could have helped TFER planners integrate state and federal plans.

All Five Pilot States Have Made Some Progress in Documenting Lessons Learned, but Four States Have Not Exercised Plans to Evaluate TFER's Effectiveness

TFER Objective 3: Document Lessons Learned

Assessing a state's progress in this objective was based on efforts made to address the following components, among others:

- Development of after-action reports from exercises or assessment documents during TFER to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot
- Provide recommendations for improvement to increase the effectiveness of catastrophic planning programs

Source: GAO application of FEMA criteria.

All states have documented lessons learned to date, but four states have not exercised TFER plans to determine their effectiveness in the event of an emergency. As shown in figure 8 and further explained in appendix IV, the TFER pilot states have provided a number of lessons learned and recommendations on how to improve a similar program in the future.³⁷ One state, Washington, has made substantial progress documenting lessons learned because it has exercised three of its plans to evaluate their effectiveness, one of the components FEMA cited in the objective. FEMA articulated the criteria for this objective in the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document, which focused on documenting lessons learned, including exercising plans to evaluate TFER's effectiveness. All five pilot states documented lessons learned for a report published by the National Guard Bureau in August 2010, and we obtained additional lessons learned during our interviews with state officials.³⁸ Further, two of the states provided us with the lessons learned they submitted to FEMA for its evaluation, which is not yet complete.³⁹

³⁷ The states provided lessons learned to the National Guard Bureau Strategic Advisory Group Leadership Council, which are described in the August 2010 report to the group; to GAO in interviews with state officials; and to FEMA in evaluation forms.

³⁸ The National Guard Bureau, *Task Force for Emergency Readiness (TFER) Program: Report to the National Guard Bureau Strategic Advisory Group Leadership Council* (Washington, D.C., August 2010).

³⁹ FEMA regional offices responded for the remaining three states.

Figure 8: Assessment of Pilot States' Documentation of Lessons Learned, as of March 2011^a

State	GAO assessment	Status
Hawaii	●	Hawaii officials provided recommendations, including: continue and expand the program to other states, maintain flexibility to determine work plans, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Additionally, state officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program, provide more clearly defined guidance, and greater coordination between FEMA and DOD. Further, funding was not enough to provide competitive salaries. Hawaii has not exercised any of its plans to determine if they will be effective in the event of an emergency.
Massachusetts	●	Massachusetts officials recommended that FEMA continue and expand the program to other states, maintain flexibility to determine work plans, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Officials stated the TFER planners all had some level of military experience, which helped them cope with the logistical challenges, and have credibility with certain audiences. Additionally, officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program and provide more clearly defined guidance. According to state officials, they have not exercised any plans.
South Carolina	●	South Carolina provided a number of recommendations, including: continue and expand the program, maintain flexibility to determine work plans, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Additionally, South Carolina officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program, and that FEMA should provide more clearly defined guidance. Officials identified coordinating security clearances across DHS and DOD as a challenge that should be resolved in similar programs in the future. The sharing of lessons learned and techniques/procedures with other states would have been helpful in developing catastrophic plans through the TFER pilot program. South Carolina also cited good initial training opportunities through TFER; however these opportunities did not extend throughout the life of the program, and thus were not available to all South Carolina TFER staff. Officials stated they have scheduled an exercise for March 2011 and that after-action reports will subsequently be developed.
Washington	●	Washington provided recommendations, including: continue and expand the program to other states, maintain the broad scope of the projects eligible to be addressed by the TFER resources, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Additionally, state officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program and FEMA provide more guidance. Further, FEMA could improve in management of grants like TFER. Washington has exercised three out of seven of its TFER plans.
West Virginia	●	West Virginia recommended FEMA continue and expand the program, maintain flexibility to determine workplans, and dedicate funding to hire planners. Additionally, officials recommended that the new program have longer time frames than the pilot and provide more clearly defined guidance. West Virginia reported there was significant difficulty in hiring people with the requisite military/civilian catastrophic planning skills and experience because of the short duration of the program. West Virginia has not exercised any of its plans.

- Substantial progress
- Some progress
- Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

^aThe GAO assessment was assigned based on an average of two components, as discussed in appendix I and elaborated in appendix IV.

Some of the lessons learned were similar across the pilot states. For example, all five states considered the pilot a success; Hawaii, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and West Virginia officials reported that TFER allowed their states to conduct catastrophic planning that otherwise would not have occurred, and Washington reported that TFER advanced its catastrophic and emergency logistics planning by at least 2 years. Washington officials further stated that the \$350,000 the state received in TFER funding generated more return on investment than any other \$350,000 in the state's emergency planning budget. Based on their view of TFER's success, officials in each of the five pilot states recommended FEMA expand TFER to other states.

All states reported three principal reasons for considering TFER a success: (1) autonomy to develop their own work plans, (2) provision of dedicated funds to hire planners, and (3) the background of the TFER planners.

(1) State officials reported that they worked collaboratively with FEMA to select catastrophic scenarios. For example, South Carolina chose to work on plans related to terrorism attacks because state officials believe they had adequately planned for hurricanes and earthquakes—the two National Planning Scenarios ranked higher than terrorism attacks in the state’s risk assessment. Officials in all five states highlighted the benefit of this flexibility.

(2) Officials in all five states reported that the narrow focus of TFER, dedicated solely to enhance catastrophic planning, was key to the pilot program’s success. State officials told us that state planners are often required to assist emergency planning and response efforts during more routine disasters, such as seasonal floods and forest fires, but since the terms of TFER did not allow states to use TFER funds for these efforts, catastrophic planning continued unabated.

(3) Officials in all five states reported that the planners’ military background was beneficial. For example, state officials in Massachusetts told us the planners’ military experience provided them with a level of experience and training not often found in other sectors and gave them credibility. However, officials in three states told us that civilian planning or emergency management experience also provided TFER planners the needed skill set.

States also reported challenges they faced, including (1) short time frames that limited their ability to complete the planning process, and (2) not enough guidance for the specialized plans they were developing.

(1) All five states reported that the short time frames limited their ability to complete the planning process. FEMA structured TFER as an 18-month program, and states noted that this was an insufficient amount of time to complete the full cycle of planning. Officials in one state thought that an adequate time frame would have been 3 years, noting that this is the time frame FEMA established for the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program. The TFER program manager stated that FEMA’s 6-month program extension—bringing the pilot program time frame

to 2 years—provided a sufficient amount of time to complete the TFER initiatives.

(2) CPG 101 provides general format and content guidance applicable to all plans, but officials in four of the pilot states said that it would have been helpful for FEMA to provide guidance for specialized plans such as catastrophic incident annexes, terrorism plans, and logistics plans. For example, one TFER planner stated that clearer guidance could have accelerated the planning process. Further, officials in a fourth state said that they are using an unpublished FEMA guide to support their planning efforts. FEMA officials told us that states can request technical assistance and examples of well-developed plans to aid in their own plan development. According to the TFER program manager, FEMA is in the process of developing additional Comprehensive Preparedness Guides that will inform plan content for future state planning efforts.

The process of documenting lessons learned is ongoing because Hawaii, South Carolina, Washington, and West Virginia are still developing TFER plans and spending TFER funds.

Conclusions

Hurricane Katrina highlighted gaps in the nation's preparedness to respond effectively to catastrophic incidents. By their nature, catastrophic events involve extraordinary levels of casualties, damage, or disruption that will likely immediately overwhelm state and local responders—circumstances that make sound planning for catastrophic events all the more crucial. Planning is a key component of national preparedness. Planning provides a methodology to determine required capabilities and helps stakeholders learn and practice their roles for building and sustaining national preparedness capabilities against terrorist attacks and other hazards. As state and local governments continue to develop and improve plans for catastrophic events and identify potential resource shortfalls, the federal government will be in a better position to understand the nature of the gaps it may be called upon to fill if state and local resources are overwhelmed. The TFER pilot program was one such effort to enhance catastrophic preparedness and provide federal stakeholders with valuable information regarding local, state, or regional response capability. However, by not consistently following sound management practices to design, administer, and evaluate the TFER pilot program and by not following its processes and procedures for administering the pilot, it is unclear whether TFER achieved its intended

purpose. As we have reported, FEMA has piloted other efforts that have not generated meaningful preparedness information from the data collected. Future pilot programs at FEMA could benefit from policy guidance that includes sound management practices to design, administer, and evaluate pilot programs. In addition, future state catastrophic planning efforts could benefit from the dissemination of the evaluation results of the TFER pilot program to relevant stakeholders.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, take the following two actions.

- To help ensure future pilot programs achieve their intended results and provide the performance information needed to make effective management decisions for broader implementation, develop and implement policies and guidance for pilot programs that follow sound management practices. This guidance should include, at a minimum, requirements for
 - a clearly articulated methodology with objectives reflective of overall program goals and standards for determining program performance;
 - procedures for monitoring program performance;
 - a data collection plan;
 - a data analysis plan; and
 - a process to disseminate the results and lessons learned that emerge from the pilot.
- To help ensure stakeholders receive valuable information regarding catastrophic preparedness from lessons learned during the TFER pilot program, disseminate the evaluation results and recommendations that emerge from the TFER pilot program in ways that meet the needs of current and future stakeholders.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to FEMA and DOD for review and comment. FEMA provided oral comments on the draft report on April 5, 2011. FEMA fully concurred with both of our recommendations but did not specify how it planned to address them. DOD did not provide comments on the draft report because the report did not include recommendations to DOD. Both FEMA and DOD provided technical comments, which we incorporated throughout our report as appropriate.

As agreed, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we are sending copies of this report to the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Secretary of Defense. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>. If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact Bill Jenkins at (202) 512-8777 or by e-mail at jenkinswo@gao.gov, or Davi M. D'Agostino at (202) 512-5431 or by e-mail at dagostinod@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Davi M. D'Agostino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Davi" and last name "D'Agostino" clearly legible.

Davi M. D'Agostino, Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William O. Jenkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" and last name "Jenkins" clearly legible.

William O. Jenkins, Director
Homeland Security and Justice

List of Congressional Requesters

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senate

The Honorable Jeff Miller
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To identify the extent to which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) followed sound management practices in developing, administering, and evaluating the Task Force for Emergency Readiness (TFER) pilot program, we analyzed program guidance and other key documents including the TFER Pilot Information Package and the Guidance and Application Kit. We analyzed prior GAO work on pilot programs and program management¹ as well as social science literature² to determine elements of sound management practices. We considered other criteria, consulting checklists on elements of program management, but determined some of the characteristics identified in this literature were not appropriate or suitable to the type of study performed by FEMA. We grouped the elements of sound management practices that we identified as relevant into three categories: design, administration, and evaluation. We then analyzed the information obtained from our interviews and site visits and compared the results of our analysis with the identified elements of sound management practices. Furthermore, we analyzed prior GAO reports and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General reports on FEMA grants administration and catastrophic preparedness to identify any past challenges.

We reviewed and analyzed FEMA grant program guidance and met with FEMA officials in the Grants Program Directorate to determine whether other grant programs, in addition to TFER, allow for funds to be used for catastrophic planning. We identified four major grant programs states can use for catastrophic planning purposes: the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program, the State Homeland Security Program, the Urban Areas Security Initiative, and the Emergency Management Performance Grants. Other grants, such as the Port Security Grant Program (PSGP)

¹ See, GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Strengthen Its Approach for Evaluating the SRFMI Data-Sharing Pilot Program*, [GAO-09-45](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 7, 2008). *Aviation Security: A National Strategy and Other Actions Would Strengthen TSA's Efforts to Secure Commercial Airport Perimeters and Access Controls*, [GAO-09-399](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 30, 2009). *Transportation Worker Identification Credential: Progress Made in Enrolling Workers and Activating Credentials but Evaluation Plan Needed to Help Inform the Implementation of Card Readers*, [GAO-10-43](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 18, 2009). See also, GAO, *Designing Evaluations*, [GAO/PEMD-10.1.4](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 1991).

² P.H. Rossi, M.W. Lipsey, and H.E. Freeman, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: 2004); Project Management Institute, *The Standard for Program Management®* (Newton Square, Pa: 2006); and Daniel L. Stufflebeam, *Program Evaluations Metaevaluation Checklist (Based on The Program Evaluation Standards)*, 1999.

were considered, but discussions with officials in the Grant Programs Directorate helped to clarify and narrow the scope of our review to the most appropriate candidates for the types of catastrophic planning described in the TFER grant. We collected fiscal year 2010 funding levels for these grants, as well as information about how funds could be used for planning, funding restrictions, and eligibility requirements.

To identify the extent to which the five states participating in FEMA's TFER pilot program addressed the pilot program's stated objectives, we analyzed information that FEMA provided in the Pilot Information Package and further defined in its TFER Evaluation Criteria document. The pilot program's three stated objectives were building relationships, developing plans, and documenting lessons learned, and FEMA provided several criteria to measure progress towards addressing each of these objectives. Additionally, FEMA identified key components to each objective. We used FEMA's criteria to assess states' progress toward addressing the three program objectives. Moreover, we identified additional criteria for the building relationships objective in FEMA's TFER Pilot Information Package, including whether pilot states coordinated with other states and with FEMA. These components were identified as key components in the TFER Pilot Information Package, but were not identified in the TFER Evaluation Criteria. Therefore, we included the additional criteria in assessing the states' progress toward addressing the building relationships objective. We assigned a numerical ranking to represent states' progress for each objective's components based on interviews we conducted and our review and analysis of documents we obtained during our site visits that included draft plans, progress reports, and status briefings. We gathered information related to the lessons learned objective from state submissions to a report published by the National Guard Bureau in August 2010, and we obtained additional lessons learned during our interviews with state officials.³ Further, two of the states provided us with the lessons learned they submitted to FEMA for its evaluation, which is not yet complete.⁴ If the state met the criterion for a particular component, we assigned it a ranking of '5', if the state partially met the criterion, we assigned it a ranking of '3', and if the state did not

³ The National Guard Bureau, *Task Force for Emergency Readiness (TFER) Program: Report to the National Guard Bureau Strategic Advisory Group Leadership Council* (Washington, D.C.: August 2010).

⁴ FEMA regional offices responded for the remaining three states.

meet the criterion, we assigned it a ranking of '0'. Next, we averaged the components for each of the three objectives to obtain an overall objective score. We then assigned designations to the overall percentages of scores as follows: averages greater than 80 percent were designated as 'substantial progress'; averages from 20 percent to 80 percent were designated as 'some progress'; and averages less than 20 percent were designated as 'little or no progress.' We did not assign designations to four criteria pertaining to developing plans and six criteria pertaining to lessons learned because we determined that these criteria do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results.

States did not receive a designation of "substantial progress" for each objective unless they met the criteria related to the key component of that objective, that is, (1) developing actual plans—measured by the completion of draft plans; and (2) building relationships with FEMA officials, Defense Coordinating Officers, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. FEMA did not identify key components of the third objective, documenting lessons learned. In instances where states received an average above 80 percent but did not meet the criteria related to these key components, we assigned a designation of "some progress" for that particular objective. For example, by adding the rankings assigned to South Carolina for building relationships, the state received a score of 31 out of 35, or 89 percent. However, South Carolina did not fully meet the criteria for coordinating with DOD and FEMA; so the state received the designation of 'some progress.'

Where possible, we used the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101 to determine the extent to which the states' plans adhered to FEMA's suggested guidelines regarding plan structure and content. About one half of the TFER states' 32 planning initiatives involved developing plans. Specifically, CPG 101 recommends that basic emergency operations plans and their annexes include the following sections: purpose, situation overview, and planning assumptions; concept of operations; organization and assignment of responsibilities; direction, control, and coordination; information collection and dissemination; administration, finance, and logistics; and authorities and references. CPG 101 provides additional guidance for the structure of the concept of operations section for hazard-specific annexes—plans South Carolina developed—and functional annexes—one of which Washington developed. We did not evaluate the content of these plans because the plans remain in draft form. CPG 101 does not offer specific content guidance for the other plans types of plans TFER states developed. We did not assign a progress designation for the

criterion that asked the extent to which states' plans adhered to CPG 101 because all but 3 of the plans TFER states are developing remain in draft form.

To address these objectives, we interviewed officials and obtained information and related documents from federal agencies, the five pilot states, and other relevant entities. Within FEMA, we met with officials from the National Preparedness Directorate, the Grants Programs Directorate, the Response Directorate, and officials in FEMA Regions I, III, IV, IX, and X. Within the Department of Defense (DOD), we met with representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense and America's Security Affairs and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We also met with U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Pacific Command officials because they are the combatant commanders whose areas of responsibilities include the United States and its territories. Further, we met with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the National Guard Bureau, the Institute for Defense Analyses, and the National Governor's Association. We conducted site visits to all five participant states from June through September 2010. During our site visits, we met with the planners hired through the TFER pilot program and other state, local, National Guard, and DOD regional officials to discuss FEMA's management of the TFER pilot program and the states' implementation of it.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2010 to April 2011 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Other FEMA Grants Available for Catastrophic Planning and States' Views on Using These Grants for Planning

We identified four primary FEMA grant programs that states and localities can use for catastrophic planning purposes, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: FEMA Grant Programs That States and Localities Can Use for Catastrophic Planning (fiscal year 2010 funding levels)

Eligible recipients	Basis of fund allocation	Funding restrictions	Use of funds for planning
State Homeland Security Program (\$842 million)			
All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands	Allocated based on three factors: minimum amounts as legislatively mandated, DHS's risk methodology, and prior year effectiveness.	States must pass through at least 80 percent of funds to local governments. At least 25 percent of total combined funds appropriated for the State Homeland Security Program and Urban Areas Security Initiative must be dedicated towards law enforcement terrorism prevention activities. Activities implemented under this grant must support terrorism preparedness. However, many capabilities which support terrorism preparedness simultaneously support preparedness for other hazards. Grantees must demonstrate this dual-use quality for any activities implemented under this program that are not explicitly focused on terrorism preparedness. Grantees may provide an optional cost share.	Funds may be used for planning efforts that enable states to prioritize needs, build capabilities, update preparedness strategies, allocate resources, and deliver preparedness programs across disciplines and levels of government. All planning efforts should focus on prevention, protection, response, and recovery efforts, which are the four core homeland security mission areas. States are encouraged to use these funds to leverage other specialized grant programs like the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program.
Urban Areas Security Initiative (\$833 million)			
64 highest risk urban areas	Allocated based on DHS's risk methodology and effectiveness - 10 highest risk urban areas are designated Tier I and the remaining 54 are designated Tier II urban areas.	States must pass through at least 80 percent of funds to local governments. At least 25 percent of total combined funds appropriated for the State Homeland Security Program and Urban Areas Security Initiative must be dedicated towards law enforcement terrorism prevention. Activities must support terrorism preparedness. However, many capabilities which support terrorism preparedness simultaneously support preparedness for other hazards. Grantees must demonstrate the dual-use quality for any activities implemented that are not explicitly focused on terrorism preparedness. Any funds retained by the state must be used in direct support of the urban area.	Funds may be used for planning efforts that enable states to prioritize needs, build capabilities, update preparedness strategies, allocate resources, and deliver preparedness programs across disciplines and levels of government. All planning efforts should focus on prevention, protection, response, and recovery efforts, which are the four core homeland security mission areas.

**Appendix II: Other FEMA Grants Available
for Catastrophic Planning and States' Views
on Using These Grants for Planning**

Eligible recipients	Basis of fund allocation	Funding restrictions	Use of funds for planning
Emergency Management Performance Grants (\$329.8 million)			
All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia	Allocated based on a designated base amount of the total available appropriated funds (0.75 percent for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; and 0.25 percent for each of the four territories - American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). The balance of funds will be distributed on a population-share basis.	Required to provide a 50 percent cost share or cash or in-kind match. ^a	Fiscal year 2010 funds are used for a range of emergency management planning activities. These plans include aspects of the following, but are not limited to: (1) modifying existing incident management and emergency operations plans, (2) developing/enhancing all-hazards mitigation plans, (3) developing/enhancing large-scale and catastrophic event incident plans, and (4) developing/enhancing continuity of operations and continuity of government plans.
Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program (\$33.6 million)			
Eleven predesignated urban areas	Allocated based on the risk of a catastrophic incident occurring in the region and the anticipated effectiveness of the proposed projects as determined through the application review process.	Up to 20 percent of a site's award may be retained by the state for implementing or integrating the urban area's approved project plans throughout the state, or with neighboring states.	Funds may be used for planning efforts to address catastrophic events, including developing contingency agreements that address logistics and prepositioning of commodities. Funded efforts must enable the prioritization of needs, building of capabilities, updating of preparedness strategies, allocation of resources, and delivery of preparedness programs across disciplines and levels of government. Funds may be used to hire staff for program management functions, but not for operational duties.

Source: GAO analysis of FEMA grant information.

^aThe requirement to allocate 25 percent of funding towards the planning priority in previous Emergency Management Performance Grants was removed from the fiscal year 2010 Emergency Management Performance Grants guidance.

Table 3 shows that these FEMA grant programs provide the states and other eligible recipients significantly more funds than TFER provided the pilot states. For example, in fiscal year 2010 two of the TFER pilot states received more than \$6 million from the Emergency Management Performance Grant program compared to the \$350,000 they each received for TFER over a 24-month period. According to FEMA officials, the TFER grant represents at most 3 percent of the grant money spent on planning by the pilot states, as of March 2010, and all TFER activities are allowable under other grant programs.

**Appendix II: Other FEMA Grants Available
for Catastrophic Planning and States' Views
on Using These Grants for Planning**

Table 3: FEMA Preparedness Grant Programs Funding Allocated to TFER Pilot States and Localities within TFER Pilot States^a

Fiscal year 2010 millions of dollars					
FEMA grant program	Hawaii	Massachusetts	South Carolina	Washington	West Virginia
State Homeland Security Program	\$6.6	\$15.6	\$7.9	\$18.4	\$6.6
Urban Areas Security Initiative	\$4.8	\$18.9	\$0	\$11.1	\$0
Emergency Management Performance Grants	\$3.3	\$6.6	\$5.3	\$6.7	\$3.6
Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program	\$1.7	\$3.6b	\$0	\$1.7	\$3.6 b

Source: GAO analysis of FEMA grant information.

^aThe five pilot states received \$350,000 each for TFER over a 24-month period.

^bFunding was allocated to urban areas that span multiple states. For Massachusetts, Boston is the principal city in its urban area, and West Virginia has counties included in the National Capitol Region urban area. West Virginia is one of six states that receive funds in its area, and, given the small area of West Virginia included in the region, a high-ranking state official said that most of the funds are spent in areas outside West Virginia.

TFER has unique attributes from other FEMA grants. The primary difference between TFER and these other grant programs is that the TFER pilot states are required to use the grant funds exclusively for planning efforts. In contrast, states may use the other FEMA grant program funds for a full range of activities such as planning, equipment, training, and construction and renovation. Like TFER, the Emergency Management Performance Grants Program provides funding to states with no requirement to pass through funding to local governments. The Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program provides funds directly to urban areas, but beginning in fiscal year 2010, states were allowed to withhold up to 20 percent of the funds to implement or integrate the urban areas' approved project plans throughout the state, or with neighboring states.¹ According to the TFER program manger, FEMA provided the TFER pilot states with the option of continuing their efforts using Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program funds; however the four states that

¹ The president's budget for fiscal year 2012 proposes eliminating funding for the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant program.

received funds under both programs chose not to pursue this option. Similarly, the State Homeland Security Program requires states to pass through at least 80 percent of the funding to local governments. Further, the Urban Area Security Initiative provides the funding to urban areas, and any funds retained by the state must be used to directly support the urban area. Consequently, states cannot use most Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant, Urban Areas Security Initiative, and State Homeland Security Program funds to conduct statewide catastrophic planning. However, officials in one state told us they used 2009 Emergency Management Performance Grant funds to hire planners to continue planning begun under TFER, and officials in two other states told us they may use State Homeland Security Program grant funding to continue the catastrophic planning efforts begun under TFER.

Appendix III: Task Force for Emergency Readiness (TFER) Evaluation Criteria

The TFER pilot program was to emphasize integration of planning efforts across sectors, jurisdictions, and functional disciplines, as well as integration among state, regional, and federal agencies. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) developed the following questions in collaboration with the participating states to evaluate TFER. The evaluation questions were structured around FEMA's stated objectives for TFER—to develop plans, build relationships, and document lessons learned.

Our assessment of the extent to which each state addressed FEMA's stated objectives for the TFER pilot is presented in appendix IV. We did not assess four criteria pertaining to developing plans and six criteria pertaining to lessons learned because we determined that these criteria do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results. Further, we did not assess the administrative elements of the data collection process or administrative elements in appendix IV. Those criteria which we did not assess are italicized below.

FEMA's TFER Pilot Program Evaluation

1. Development of well coordinated and integrated preparedness plans through an effective planning process.

a. Please provide a summary of the primary TFER accomplishments.

b. Describe efforts to coordinate and integrate plans with state and federal partners.

c. Does TFER supported planning reflect the National Preparedness Guidelines and the full cycle of planning steps outlined in CPG 101?

d. Is TFER planning responsive to the National Planning Scenarios and/or other threats identified through the state's own all-hazards risk assessment?

e. Are the structure, organization, and content of TFER-developed plans / annexes / appendices consistent with that recommended in CPG 101?

f. How are TFER efforts coordinated and integrated with resourcing efforts (e.g., training, exercises, grants, etc.)?

g. Are TFER developed plans consistent with current state emergency plans?

Are they integrated and not duplicative?

h. Have actual plans been produced? If so, what is their impact on state emergency readiness?

i. In what areas have TFER supported plans been developed (e.g., logistics, coordination, etc.)?

2. Establishment of cross-sector and interagency relationships and protocols.

a. Does TFER supported planning reflect the formation and involvement of the sort of integrated and collaborative planning teams described in CPG 101?

b. Have mechanisms been established / augmented and employed to ensure cross-sector, multijurisdictional, and interagency planning coordination and integration?

c. Have TFER supported plans been coordinated with local jurisdictions? Which ones? State agencies? Which ones? Federal partners? Which ones?

d. Has a blending of TFER civil-military planning expertise been fully exploited to assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning?

e. How have TFER efforts incorporated the capabilities of the private sector as partners in planning activities?

3. Documentation of lessons learned and recommendations for improvement.

a. In the opinion of state stakeholders, has the TFER Program resulted in demonstrable improvement in state planning capability?

b. To what degree has state-level TFER planning been synchronized with and improved the overall quality and effectiveness of planning efforts?

c. How were TFER planners integrated into the state emergency management structure and process?

d. Has the TFER Program resulted in meaningful recommendations for the improvement of catastrophic preparedness planning doctrine?

e. Are TFER lessons learned exportable and useful to other states and regions to further the evolution and strengthening of their own planning programs?

f. Has the pilot identified any additional planning / protocol / procedure shortfalls due to integration / synchronization efforts?

g. Have any exercise After-Action Reports (AARs) or assessment documents been developed by the site in the course of the TFER Pilot implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot?

h. Please provide recommendations for improvements to increase the effectiveness of the catastrophic planning programs.

FEMA also requested copies of plans developed and collected feedback on the administrative aspects of the pilot program.

1. Data collection process.

a. Please provide copies of completed / draft plans.

b. Please provide an update of the program plan, to include the steps necessary to complete ongoing projects.

2. Administrative elements.

a. Describe any challenges faced managing the TFER funds.

b. Describe the hiring and retention process for your TFER planners. Include time lines, training, and other elements as appropriate.

*c. Describe additional administrative successes and challenges
in managing the pilot.*

Appendix IV: Our Review of Each State's Participation in the Task Force for Emergency Readiness Pilot Program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) launched the Task Force for Emergency Readiness Pilot Program (TFER) to improve the capacity and integration of efforts to plan a response to catastrophic disasters. Under the TFER pilot, FEMA was to grant \$350,000 to each of five participating states—Hawaii, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Washington, and West Virginia. FEMA designed TFER to run 18 months, beginning on September 1, 2008, and ending on March 31, 2010, but extended the pilot program by an additional 6 months to allow the states more time to accomplish their goals. The TFER pilot was to emphasize horizontal integration of planning efforts across sectors, jurisdictions, and functional disciplines, as well as vertical integration among state, regional, and federal agencies. For example, regarding vertical integration, states were to integrate planning efforts with the Department of Defense (DOD) through its Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. To help develop plans to respond to catastrophic disasters, states could hire up to three full-time planners ideally with civilian and military planning expertise. FEMA's stated objectives for the TFER pilot were to build relationships, develop plans, and document lessons learned, and states were to focus their planning on the National Planning Scenarios, which represent examples of the gravest dangers facing the United States, including terrorist attacks and natural disasters, and have been accorded the highest priority for federal planning efforts. FEMA articulated these objectives in the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document that was ultimately to be used to evaluate the TFER pilot. Both of these documents refer to FEMA's Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101 as a source states were to use to guide their planning process.

In our assessment of the extent to which each state had addressed FEMA's stated objectives for the TFER pilot, we reviewed those documents, used the criteria in them that we determined were measurable and appropriate to assess the states' progress towards meeting each objective, assigned a numerical ranking to each objective's criteria, and then averaged the rankings for each objective's criteria. Finally, we assigned designations to these averages. When a state addressed more than 80 percent of the criteria for an objective this was designated "substantial progress"; from 20 percent to 80 percent, "some progress"; and below 20 percent, "little or no progress." We gathered information related to the lessons learned objective from state submissions to a report published by the National

Guard Bureau in August 2010, and we obtained additional lessons learned during our interviews with state officials.¹ Further, two of the states provided us with the lessons learned they submitted to FEMA for its evaluation, which is not yet complete.² We did not assign designations to four criteria pertaining to developing plans and six criteria pertaining to lessons learned because we determined that these criteria do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results. Four of the five pilot states are still spending TFER funds, and the states' status in meeting TFER's stated objectives may change as catastrophic planning continues. We assessed states' progress as of March 2011.

Hawaii

In figure 9, we summarize Hawaii's TFER initiatives, note their status, and describe the role of the planners working on them.

¹ The National Guard Bureau, *Task Force for Emergency Readiness (TFER) Program: Report to the National Guard Bureau Strategic Advisory Group Leadership Council* (Washington, D.C.: August 2010).

² FEMA regional offices responded for the remaining three states.

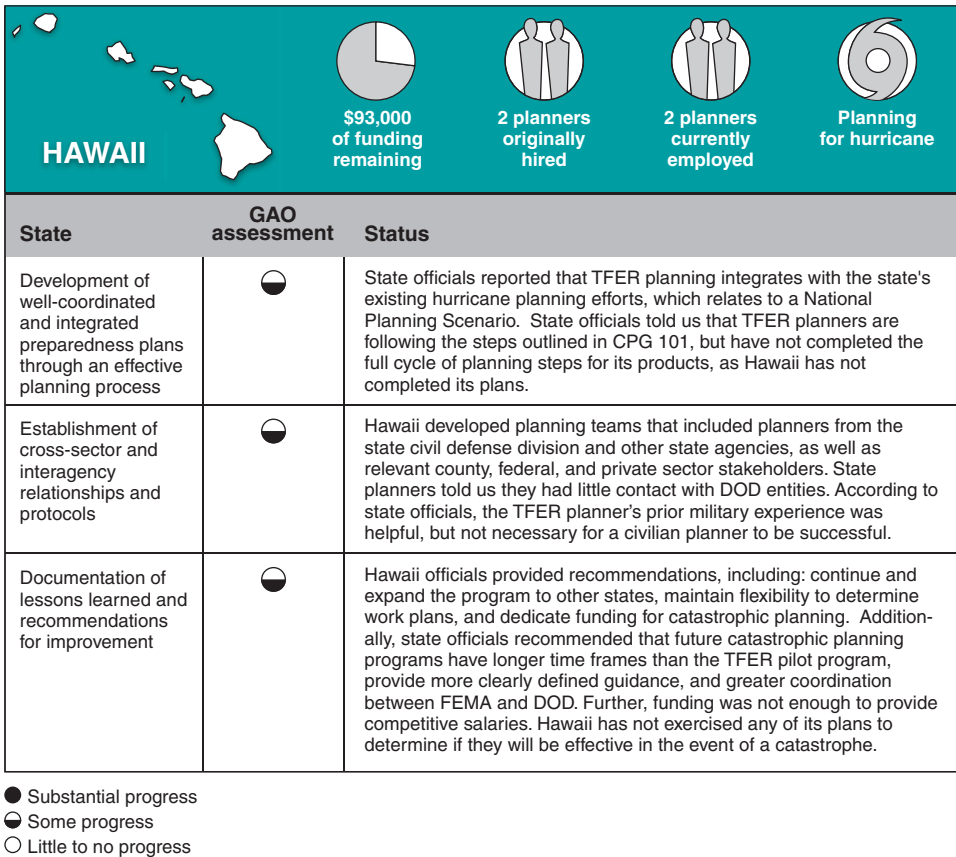
Figure 9: Summary and Status of Hawaii's TFER Initiatives and the Role of Planners Working on Them, as of March 2011

TFER initiative	Status	Planners' role
Various logistics and resource management plans • Include the Resource Management Plan, Hawaii Logistics Plan, and Mutual Aid Plans	Ongoing	Research and provide input to state officials writing the plans
Logistics synchronization matrix • Identifies (1) interdependencies among six task forces (e.g., those for mass evacuation, energy, and debris removal) that would respond to a major hurricane making landfall in Honolulu and (2) actions taken by those task forces	Draft products	Engage all six task forces and the Statewide Logistics Working Group and create the logistics synchronization matrix
Mass evacuation/reception initiative with Western states • Develops a pilot program with Arizona, California, and Washington to establish reception sites to receive evacuees for further placement/movement	Ongoing	Coordinate efforts with Arizona, California, and Washington
Disaster management software tool (WebEOC) • Coordinates responses to catastrophic events	Ongoing	Link other state plans with this software

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

Hawaii is still spending TFER funds and has two TFER planners. As of March 2011, Hawaii had made some progress in addressing FEMA's stated pilot program objectives. In figure 10, we depict the funding expenditure status of the Hawaii TFER pilot and our assessment of the progress made in the pilot program towards addressing FEMA's stated pilot program objectives.

Figure 10: Expenditure Status of the Hawaii TFER Program and Our Assessment of Progress Made towards Addressing FEMA's Objectives, as of March 2011



Source: GAO analysis of state information.

In figure 11, we detailed figure 10's assessment of the progress made in the Hawaii TFER pilot program towards addressing FEMA's stated objectives by (1) listing the criteria from the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document used to evaluate the progress of each objective and (2) providing our assessment score for each criterion.

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Figure 11: Criteria Used to Assess Progress Made in Hawaii TFER Pilot Program towards Addressing FEMA Objectives, as of March 2011^a

Development of well-coordinated and integrated preparedness plans through an effective planning process. ●		
Describe efforts to coordinate and integrate plans with state and federal partners.	●	According to state officials, Hawaii coordinated with state agencies such as the Department of Health and Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; and federal agencies such as Transportation Security Administration and the General Services Administration.
Does TFER supported planning reflect the National Preparedness Guidelines and the full cycle of planning steps outlined in CPG 101?	◐	TFER planners stated they are following the steps outlined in CPG 101, but have not completed the full cycle of planning steps for its products.
Is TFER planning responsive to the National Planning Scenarios and/or other threats identified through the state's own all-hazards risk assessment?	●	Hawaii based its TFER Pilot Program project areas on the 2006 Nationwide Plan Review Phase 2 Report, which cited a scenario involving the impact of a major hurricane.
Are TFER developed plans consistent with current state emergency plans? Are they integrated and not duplicative?	●	The logistics plans integrate with the state's existing hurricane planning efforts, are consistent with state plans, and are not duplicative.
Have actual plans been produced?	◐	Hawaii has provided us with two draft plans. However, the plans are incomplete and work is ongoing.
Establishment of cross-sector and interagency relationships and protocols. ●		
Does TFER supported planning reflect the formation and involvement of the sort of integrated and collaborative planning teams described in CPG 101?	●	Hawaii inserted its TFER planners into its existing planning team in the state's civil defense division. The team includes other state agencies, as well as relevant local, federal, and private sector stakeholders.
Have mechanisms been established/augmented and employed to ensure cross-sector, multijurisdictional, and interagency planning coordination and integration?	●	The TFER planners coordinated with existing interagency taskforces as well as the statewide Logistics Working Group.
Have TFER supported plans been coordinated with local jurisdictions? State agencies? Which ones? Federal partners? Which ones?	●	According to state officials, Hawaii coordinated with local jurisdictions such as county and city officials; state agencies such as the Department of Transportation; and federal agencies such as Transportation Security Administration and General Services Administration.
Has a blending of TFER civil-military planning expertise been fully exploited to assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning?	◐	While Hawaii TFER officials agreed that a blend of civilian-military expertise is helpful and one of the TFER planners and the TFER supervisor had prior military experience, they did not feel it was necessary in order to be a successful civilian planner. Officials stated that the TFER planners did not have frequent contact with the Defense Coordinating Officer or other personnel in the Defense Coordinating Element. However, the Defense Coordinating Officer participates in TFER workgroups. Further, they did not coordinate with Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers – part-time military personnel who work primarily on the weekends. Hawaii TFER planners coordinated with the National Guard as the Adjutant General oversees the National Guard and the state civil defense division where the TFER planners were placed, but this coordination was limited by deployments.
How have TFER efforts incorporated the capabilities of the private sector as partners in planning activities?	●	Hawaii included Target and Walmart in its planning processes, and state officials told us they included nongovernmental organizations such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army in their planning work groups.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with other states?	●	Hawaii planners coordinated with the TFER pilot state of Washington, along with the non-TFER states Oregon, California, Nevada, and Arizona in its hurricane exercise. Hawaii planners visited Florida, North Carolina, and Washington to learn more about how these states developed catastrophic planning tools.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with FEMA?	◐	TFER planners told us they coordinated frequently with FEMA's Pacific Area Office within FEMA Region IX, but did not coordinate regularly with FEMA Headquarters. Specifically, FEMA provided technical assistance and trainings.

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Documentation of lessons learned and recommendations for improvement. 		
Have any exercise after-action reports or assessment documents been developed by the site in the course of the TFER Pilot implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot?		According to state officials, they have not exercised their plans. As such, the state has not developed any exercise after-action reports.
Please provide recommendations for improvement to increase the effectiveness of the catastrophic planning programs.		Hawaii officials provided a number of recommendations, including: continue and expand the program to other states, maintain flexibility to determine work plans, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Additionally, state officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program, provide more clearly defined guidance, and greater coordination between FEMA and DOD. Further, funding was not enough to provide competitive salaries.

-  Substantial progress
-  Some progress
-  Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

^aWe selected these criteria from the TFER Evaluation Criteria document and the TFER Pilot Information Package. We did not assess 10 of the criteria, as described in app. I, because they do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results.

We gathered additional information on Hawaii’s efforts to develop plans and document lessons learned for the criteria we were unable to quantify. For example, we analyzed two Hawaii draft plans, which did not contain all of the CPG 101 components. However, we were unable to fully assess the content of the plans because they are incomplete and work is ongoing. Further, Hawaii officials stated that TFER allowed Hawaii to focus on logistics planning, and without TFER, Hawaii would not be able to undertake this planning. Hawaii reported that TFER has clearly contributed to the development of planning task forces and has provided a significant contribution towards state catastrophic planning. Additionally, Hawaii officials stated that the TFER logistics planning can be used by island territories such as Guam and Puerto Rico with similar logistical challenges.

Massachusetts

In figure 12, we summarize Massachusetts's TFER initiatives, note their status, and describe the role of the planners working on them.

Figure 12: Summary and Status of Massachusetts' TFER Initiatives and the Role of Planners Working on Them, as of March 2011

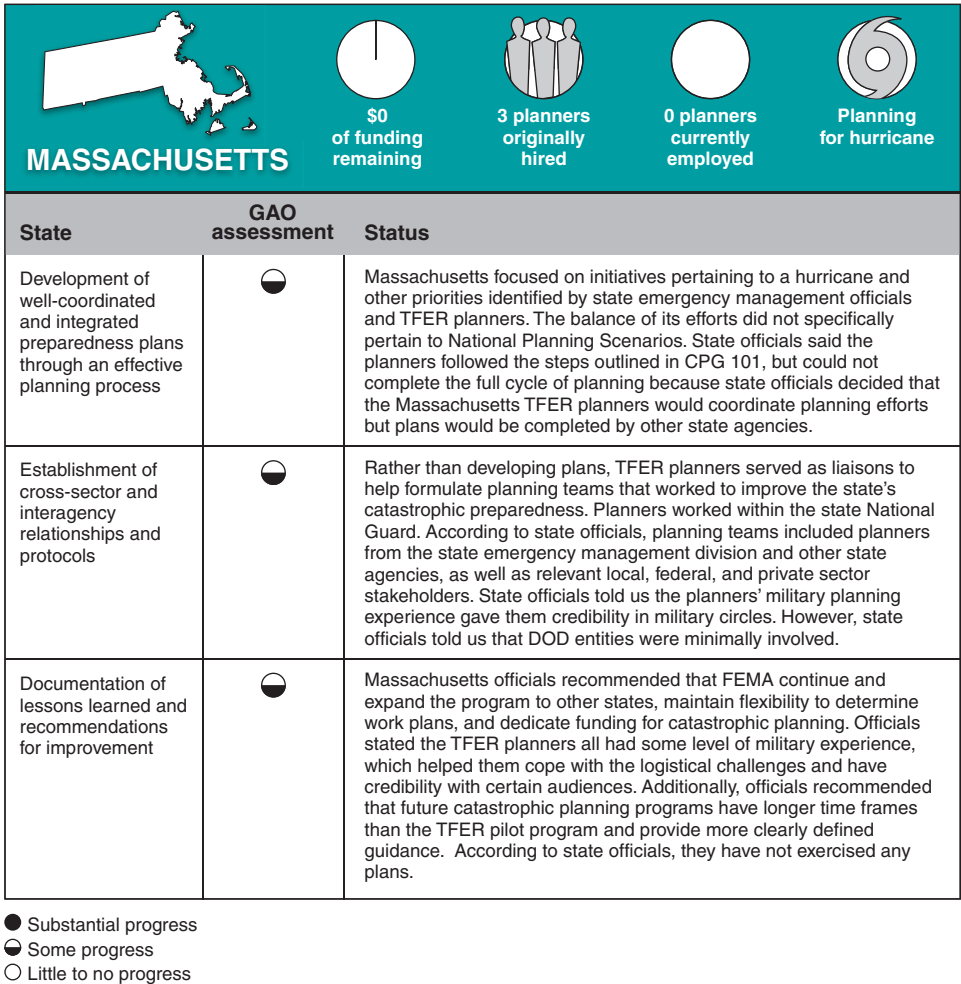
TFER initiative	Status	Planners' role
Cape Cod Emergency Traffic Plan Facilitates egress of the high volume of traffic from Cape Cod in the event of a hurricane, particularly during the peak tourist season, as well as prepares for the temporary sheltering of displaced persons	Updated annually	Coordinate planning efforts for transient shelter operations and shelter medical services
Force package planning - Provides local jurisdictions Massachusetts National Guard domestic response capabilities, should locales need these resources during an emergency - Clarifies capabilities and capability gaps in state emergency plans	Draft product	Draft packages
Massachusetts state defense force revitalization - Provides a cadre of skilled professionals capable of assisting the state in an emergency - Trains medical response force so that out-of-state assistance is not necessary	Cadre is operational and expected to be fully staffed by mid-2011	Establish the defense force and recruited its leadership
Statewide medical support planning Focuses on leveraging federal resources (e.g., Federal Medical Stations) while increasing the state's self-reliance, as the State Defense Force could operate these stations	State's Department of Public Health is coordinating with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as well as the National Guard	Facilitate collaborative planning among various state and federal stakeholders to create a statewide medical support plan
Input critical infrastructure into database Helps to ensure that state and local first responders had access to sufficient information about the Massachusetts National Guard infrastructure for their emergency response planning	TFER planners have added the National Guard infrastructure to the Automated Critical Asset Management System database and are encouraging state agencies and the private sector to do the same	Work with the Commonwealth Fusion Center to add 24 National Guard facilities into the database
Joint reception, staging, onward movement, and integration - Establishes written rules and guidelines for the reception, tracking, and demobilization of emergency responders following or in anticipation of a significant preplanned event, major disaster, or emergency - Includes FEMA Region I and all states within the region	Existing planning efforts may be integrated into DOD regional planning	Collect data on the state's capabilities to support these operations

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

Massachusetts spent all of its TFER funds and therefore does not have any TFER planners employed. As of March 2011, Massachusetts had made some progress in meeting FEMA's stated pilot program objectives. In

figure 13, we depict the funding expenditure status of the Massachusetts TFER pilot and our assessment of the progress made in the pilot program towards addressing FEMA's stated pilot program objectives.

Figure 13: Expenditure Status of the Massachusetts TFER Pilot and Our Assessment of Progress Made towards Addressing FEMA's Objectives, as of March 2011



Source: GAO analysis of state information.

In figure 14, we detailed figure 13's assessment of the progress made in the Massachusetts TFER pilot program towards addressing FEMA's stated objectives by (1) listing the criteria from the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document used to evaluate the

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progress of each objective and (2) providing our assessment score for each criterion.

Figure 14: Criteria Used to Assess Progress Made in Massachusetts TFER Pilot towards Addressing FEMA Objectives, as of March 2011^a

Development of well-coordinated and integrated preparedness plans through an effective planning process ●		
Describe efforts to coordinate and integrate plans with state and federal partners.	●	Massachusetts TFER planners told us they coordinated TFER planning initiatives with state agencies such as the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Massachusetts State Police; and federal agencies such as the National Guard, U.S. Public Health Service, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Coast Guard.
Does TFER supported planning reflect the National Preparedness Guidelines and the full cycle of planning steps outlined in CPG 101?	●	Planners told us they followed the steps outlined in CPG 101, but could not complete the full cycle of planning because state officials decided that the Massachusetts TFER planners would coordinate the planning efforts but plans would be completed by other state agencies.
Is TFER planning responsive to the National Planning Scenarios and/or other threats identified through the state's own all-hazards risk assessment?	●	Massachusetts focused on initiatives pertaining to a hurricane and other priorities identified by state emergency management officials and TFER planners. The balance of its efforts did not specifically pertain to National Planning Scenarios.
Are TFER developed plans consistent with current state emergency plans? Are they integrated and not duplicative?	●	The projects chosen addressed gaps in Massachusetts catastrophic planning and are not duplicative.
Have actual plans been produced?	○	No. However, the TFER planners coordinated efforts that resulted in an update to the Cape Cod Emergency Traffic Plan to include transient shelter operations and shelter medical services.
Establishment of cross-sector and interagency relationships and protocols ●		
Does TFER supported planning reflect the formation and involvement of the sort of integrated and collaborative planning teams described in CPG 101?	●	The focus of the Massachusetts TFER effort was to serve as liaisons to help formulate planning teams that worked to improve the state's catastrophic preparedness, and planners worked within the Massachusetts National Guard. Planning teams included planners from the state emergency management division and other state agencies, as well as relevant local, federal, and private sector stakeholders.
Have mechanisms been established/augmented and employed to ensure cross-sector, multijurisdictional, and interagency planning coordination and integration?	●	According to state officials, the TFER program established and employed workgroups for its various initiatives.
Have TFER supported plans been coordinated with local jurisdictions? State agencies? Which ones? Federal partners? Which ones?	●	Massachusetts TFER planners told us they coordinated TFER planning initiatives with local jurisdictions such as Barnstable County and local law enforcement; state agencies such as the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the National Guard, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health; and federal agencies such as FEMA Region 1, the U.S. Public Health Service, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Coast Guard.
Has a blending of TFER civil-military planning expertise been fully exploited to assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning?	●	State officials told us the planners' military planning experience gave them credibility in military circles, and all three planners were placed within the National Guard. However, state officials told us that DOD entities such as the Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer were minimally involved. Further, the Defense Coordinating Officer from FEMA Region I told us it would be difficult for TFER planners to coordinate with Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers because they work on the weekends, and do not often develop plans.
How have TFER efforts incorporated the capabilities of the private sector as partners in planning activities?	●	Massachusetts TFER planners told us they coordinated with the private sector. For example, the planners gathered critical infrastructure data from the private sector for one of its projects and coordinated with nongovernmental organizations such as the American Red Cross and State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with other states?	●	The Massachusetts TFER planners said they had contact with their counterparts in Hawaii and Washington as well as North Carolina, a non-TFER state.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with FEMA?	●	TFER planners told us they coordinated frequently with FEMA Region I, but had limited contact with FEMA headquarters. Specifically, Region I provided information on trainings and responded to information requests from TFER planners.

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Documentation of lessons learned and recommendations for improvement 		
Have any exercise after-action reports or assessment documents been developed by the site in the course of the TFER Pilot implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot?		According to state officials, they have not exercised any plans. As such, the state has not developed any exercise after-action reports.
Please provide recommendations for improvement to increase the effectiveness of the catastrophic planning programs.		Massachusetts officials provided a number of recommendations, including: continue and expand the program to other states, maintain flexibility to determine work plans, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Officials stated the TFER planners all had some level of military experience, which helped them cope with the logistical challenges, and have credibility with certain audiences. Additionally, officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program and provide more clearly defined guidance.

-  Substantial progress
-  Some progress
-  Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

*We selected these criteria from the TFER Evaluation Criteria document and the TFER Pilot Information Package. We did not assess 10 of the criteria, as described in app. I, because they do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results.

We gathered additional information from Massachusetts on developing plans and documenting lessons learned, but were unable to quantify this information using FEMA’s evaluation criteria. For example, Massachusetts TFER planners told us they often attended state and regional training and workshops, which integrated them with resourcing efforts. However, we did not assess progress towards meeting this objective because it is unclear how these training and workshops inform plan development. Further, Massachusetts officials stated that TFER was successful and proved valuable in bringing state, local, and county agencies together with nongovernmental organizations under the umbrella of state emergency planning. Additionally, TFER officials stated it would have been beneficial to have TFER planners in other New England states available to coordinate with for events that would likely impact the entire region.

South Carolina

South Carolina focused its TFER pilot on planning in response to terrorist attacks. In figure 15, we summarize South Carolina's TFER initiatives, note their status, and describe the role of the planners working on them.

Figure 15: Summary and Status of South Carolina's TFER Initiatives and the Role of Planners Working on Them as of March 2011

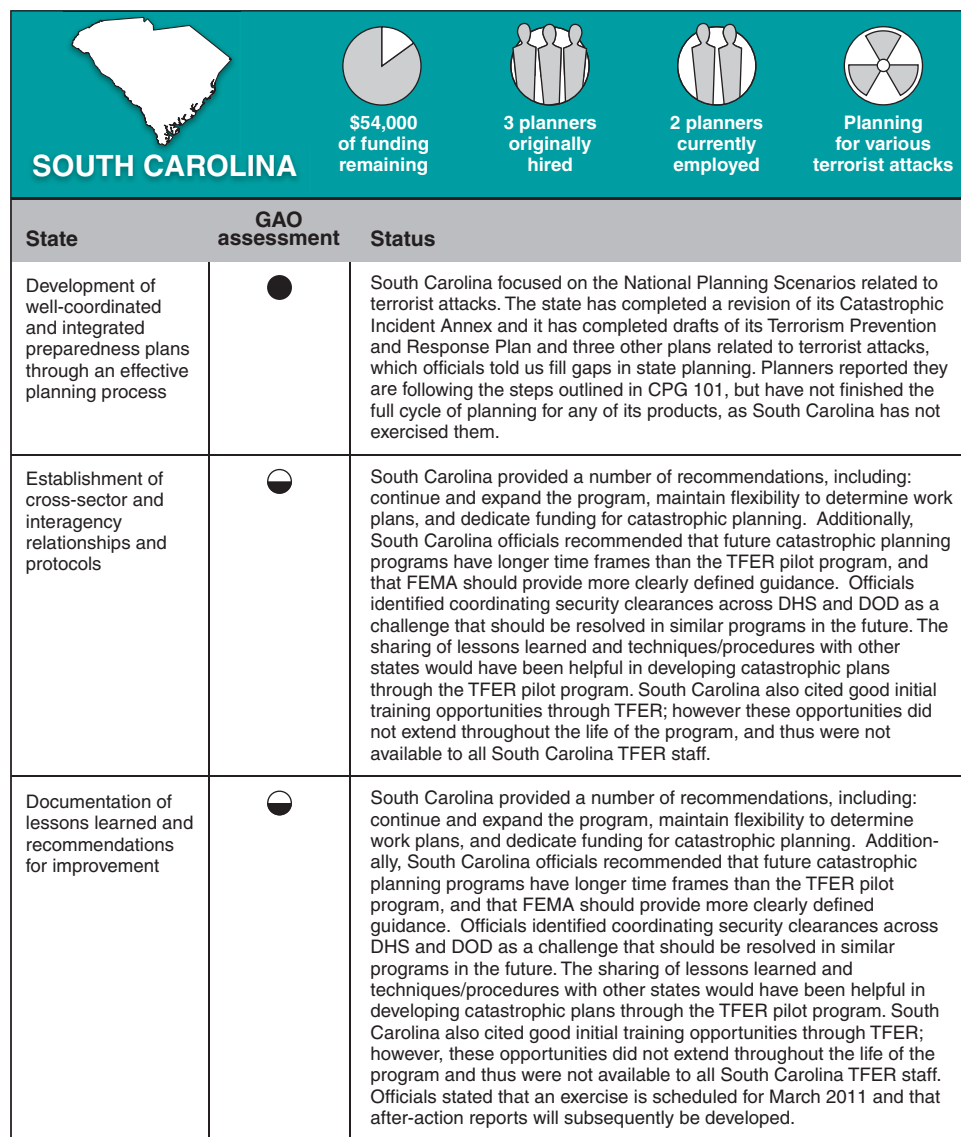
TFER initiative	Status	Planners' role
Terrorism Prevention and Response Plan Comprises an appendix to the South Carolina Emergency Operations Plan that articulates prevention, protection, response, and recovery activities related to a terrorist event	Draft complete. Some of the plan's concepts have been exercised.	Update plan to address gaps in the response and recovery sections and draft prevention and protection aspects of the plan
Catastrophic Incident Response Annex Comprises an appendix to the South Carolina Emergency Operations Plan to provide guidance and direction for the State Emergency Response Team as it responds to, and recovers from, specific catastrophic incidents	Complete	Update plan
Radiological Dispersal Device Attack Response Plan - Outlines an organized, timely, and integrated response from local, state, and federal responders to a detonation of a radiological dispersal device at a public park in South Carolina - Serves as an attachment to the South Carolina Catastrophic Incident Response Annex	Draft product	Draft attachment
10 Kiloton Uranium Improvised Nuclear Device Response Plan^a Outlines an organized, timely, and integrated response from local, state, and federal responders to a detonation of an improvised 10 kiloton nuclear device at a major seaport in South Carolina	Draft product	Draft attachment
Explosives Attack-Bombing Using Multiple Improvised Explosive Devices Plan^a Guides the assignment of responsibilities and actions of South Carolina Emergency Management Division and its associated State Emergency Response Team, when responding to requests from South Carolina counties that may be involved in such an incident	Draft product	Draft attachment
Biological Attack: Animal Disease Response Plan^a Outlines an organized, timely, and integrated response from federal, state, and local responders to an animal disease outbreak	Ongoing	Draft attachment
Biological Event: Aerosol Anthrax Response Plan^a Outlines an organized, timely, and integrated response from federal, state, and local responders to an aerosol anthrax attack	Ongoing	Draft attachment
Cyber Attack Response Plan^a Outlines an organized, timely, and integrated response from federal, state, and local responders to a cyber attack	Incomplete	Draft attachment
National Planning Scenarios response matrices Document the assets and capabilities of state agencies by emergency support function for the National Planning Scenarios	Incomplete	- Compile matrices for the National Planning Scenarios - Focus on nuclear, radiological, and improvised explosive device scenarios

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

South Carolina is still spending TFER funds and currently has two TFER planners employed. As of March 2011, South Carolina had made some progress in addressing FEMA's stated pilot program objectives of building relationships and documenting lessons learned and had made substantial progress in developing plans. In figure 16, we depict the funding expenditure status of the South Carolina TFER pilot program and our assessment of the progress made in TFER towards addressing FEMA's stated pilot program objectives.

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Figure 16: Expenditure Status of the South Carolina TFER Pilot and Our Assessment of Progress Made towards Addressing FEMA's Objectives, as of March 2011



- Substantial progress
- ◐ Some progress
- Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

In figure 17, we detailed figure 16's assessment of the progress made in South Carolina's TFER pilot program towards addressing FEMA's stated objectives by (1) listing the criteria from the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document used to evaluate the progress of each objective and (2) providing our assessment score for each criterion.

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Figure 17: Criteria Used to Assess Progress Made in South Carolina's TFER Pilot towards Addressing FEMA Objectives, as of March 2011^a

Development of well-coordinated and integrated preparedness plans through an effective planning process. ●		
Describe efforts to coordinate and integrate plans with state and federal partners.	●	According to state officials, South Carolina coordinated TFER plans with state entities, including the South Carolina Department of Public Safety, Department of Health and Environmental Control, and emergency support function team leaders; and federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and FEMA Region IV.
Does TFER supported planning reflect the National Preparedness Guidelines and the full cycle of planning steps outlined in CPG 101?	◐	Planners stated they are following the steps outlined in CPG 101, but have not finished the full cycle of planning for any of its products.
Is TFER planning responsive to the National Planning Scenarios and/or other threats identified through the state's own all-hazards risk assessment?	●	South Carolina focused on the National Planning Scenarios related to terrorist attacks.
Are TFER developed plans consistent with current state emergency plans? Are they integrated and not duplicative?	●	According to state officials, TFER-developed plans integrate with existing state plans, fill gaps in the state plan compendium, are not duplicative, and revise an existing plan to address shortcomings.
Have actual plans been produced?	●	The state is developing response plans for terrorist attacks and is updating its Terrorism Prevention and Response Plan. South Carolina has completed an update of its Catastrophic Incident Response Annex, has completed drafts of the Terrorism Prevention and Response Plan, and three hazard-specific response plans.
Establishment of cross-sector and interagency relationships and protocols ◐		
Does TFER supported planning reflect the formation and involvement of the sort of integrated and collaborative planning teams?	●	South Carolina inserted its TFER planners into the existing planning teams in its law enforcement and emergency management divisions. Planning teams also included other state agencies, as well as relevant local, federal, and private sector stakeholders.
Have mechanisms been established/augmented and employed to ensure cross-sector, multijurisdictional, and interagency planning coordination and integration?	●	South Carolina's TFER planners stated they coordinated with established workgroups including leaders from the state's emergency support function framework.
Have TFER supported plans been coordinated with local jurisdictions? State agencies? Which ones? Federal partners? Which ones?	●	According to state officials, South Carolina coordinated TFER plans with local jurisdictions such as local law enforcement and emergency management organizations; state entities, including the South Carolina Department of Public Safety, Department of Health and Environmental Control, and emergency support function team leaders; and federal agencies, including the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
Has a blending of TFER civil-military planning expertise been fully exploited to assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning?	◐	TFER and FEMA officials stated the planners' military background helped them learn quickly about planning issues and proved to be an asset. A TFER planner in South Carolina told us the state agencies involved in TFER coordinated with National Guard officials on a monthly basis and included them in TFER workgroups. TFER planners coordinated with the Region's Defense Coordinating Officer and an Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer but the coordination was limited.
How have TFER efforts incorporated the capabilities of the private sector as partners in planning activities?	●	Planners consulted with the private sector and included it in workgroups and the statewide exercise.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with other states?	●	The South Carolina TFER planners told us they regularly exchanged ideas with other states' TFER planners. South Carolina shared its Catastrophic Incident Annex with TFER planners in Washington and West Virginia. A South Carolina TFER planner also told us she coordinated terrorism planning efforts with North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee.
Have TFE pilot states coordinated with FEMA?	◐	According to state officials, TFER planners coordinated frequently with FEMA Region IV, but had limited contact with FEMA headquarters. Specifically, Region IV provided information on technical issues and helped the TFER planners build relationships with other stakeholders.

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Documentation of lessons learned and recommendations for improvement 		
Have any exercise after-action reports or assessment documents been developed by the site in the course of the TFER Pilot implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot?		According to state officials, the first of two exercises is scheduled for March 10, 2011, and after-action reports will subsequently be developed.
Please provide recommendations for improvement to increase the effectiveness of the catastrophic planning programs.		South Carolina provided a number of recommendations, including: continue and expand the program, maintain flexibility to determine work plans, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Additionally, South Carolina officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program, and that FEMA should provide more clearly defined guidance. Officials identified coordinating security clearances across DHS and DOD as a challenge that should be resolved in similar programs in the future. The sharing of lessons learned and techniques/procedures with other states would have been helpful in developing catastrophic plans through the TFER pilot program. South Carolina also cited good initial training opportunities through TFER; however, these opportunities did not extend throughout the life of the program, and thus were not available to all South Carolina TFER staff. The second and third hired South Carolina TFER planners went through an informal in-house training procedure.

-  Substantial progress
-  Some progress
-  Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

^aWe selected these criteria from the TFER Evaluation Criteria document and the TFER Pilot Information Package. We did not assess 10 of the criteria, as described in app. I, because they do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results.

We gathered additional information from South Carolina on developing plans and documenting lessons learned, but were unable to quantify this information using FEMA's evaluation criteria. For example, we were unable to fully assess South Carolina's plans because seven of eight TFER-developed plans are in draft form. However, all four of the plans state officials provided are missing at least one of the recommended sections described in CPG 101. State officials told us that omitted sections are included in other state planning documents. Additionally, state officials reported that the state used TFER to continue work on its existing work plan, and South Carolina has developed plans and responses to some of the threats that they would not have otherwise been able to address.

Washington

Washington focused its TFER pilot on developing logistics plans and on a catastrophic incident plan. In figure 18, we summarize Washington's TFER initiatives, note their status, and describe the role of the planners working on them.

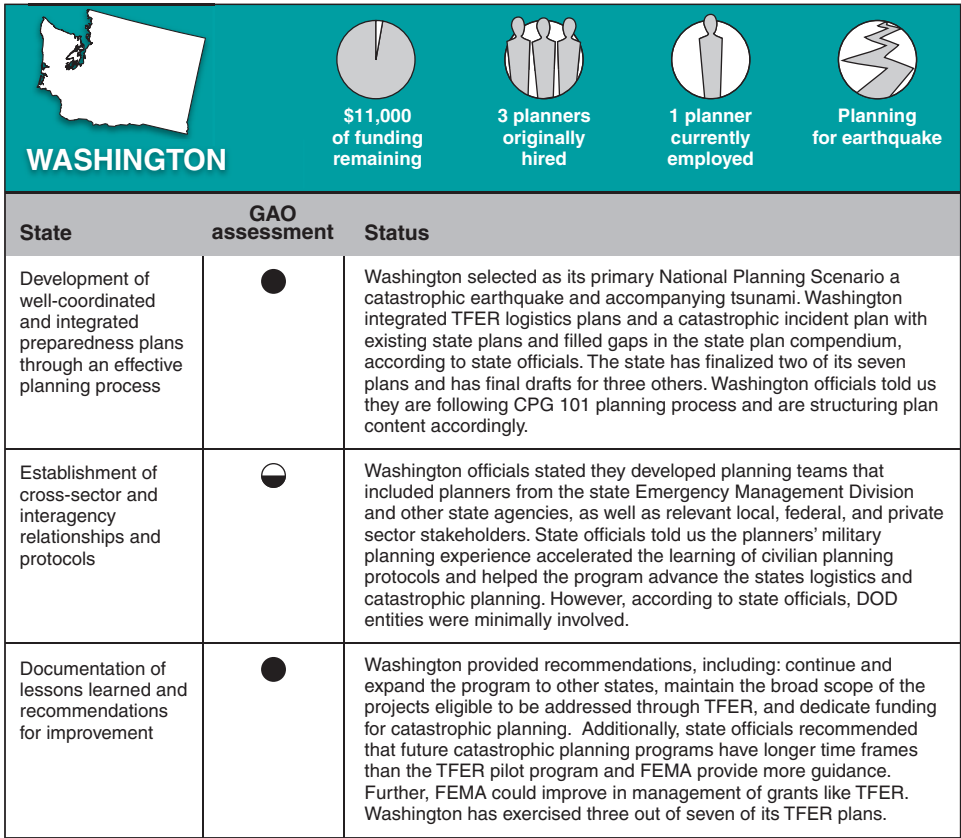
Figure 18: Summary and Status of Washington's TFER Initiatives and the Role of Planners Working on Them, as of March 2011

TFER initiative	Status	Planners' role
Catastrophic Incident Annex Establishes the context and the strategy for implementing and coordinating a proactive state response to a catastrophic incident.	Final draft product	Draft annex from start to finish
Evacuation Annex Establishes context for a state-managed evacuation	Draft framework completed	Develop framework from beginning
Reception and Integration Plan Standard Operating Procedures - Establishes written rules and guidelines for the reception, tracking, and demobilization of emergency responders following or in anticipation of a significant preplanned event, major disaster or emergency - Supports the Movement Coordination Appendix to the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan	Draft product. The Emergency Management Division has exercised the plan. Final adjustments being made.	Draft product
Long Term Recovery Appendix Establishes uniform policies for effective coordination to accomplish short-term and long-term recovery, restoration, and redevelopment	Final draft product	Update appendix
Movement Coordination Appendix Tracks and coordinates safe, secure, and timely movement of inbound disaster resources into the state and through affected jurisdictions following an emergency or disaster	Draft product	Draft appendix. Participate in the exercises pertaining to the procedures described in the appendix.
State Staging Areas Standard Operation Procedures Establishes written rules and guidelines for the selection, activation, operation, and demobilization of state staging areas to ensure that the state can receive, track, and distribute emergency resources throughout the state in an efficient, effective, and timely manner following or in anticipation of a significant preplanned event, major disaster, or emergency	Final product	Draft procedures. Participate in the exercises pertaining to these procedures.
TFER trainings for Local Jurisdictions Prepares local jurisdictions to integrate with state logistics efforts	Some trainings are complete, while others are in development	Develop and execute training sessions
Defense Support for Civil Authorities Annex - Establishes the circumstances and procedures under which the governor can order the Washington National Guard into active duty - Coordinates the use of military assets during an emergency or disaster	Final product	Update this annex to the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

Washington is spending TFER funds and as of March 2011 had one TFER planner employed. As of March 2011, Washington had made some progress in addressing FEMA’s stated pilot program objectives. In figure 19, we depict the funding expenditure status of the Washington TFER pilot and our assessment of the progress made in the pilot towards addressing FEMA’s stated pilot objectives.

Figure 19: Expenditure Status of the Washington TFER Pilot and Our Assessment of Progress Made towards Addressing FEMA’s Objectives, as of March 2011



- Substantial progress
- ◐ Some progress
- Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

In figure 20, we detailed figure 19’s assessment of the progress made in Washington’s TFER pilot program towards addressing FEMA’s stated

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objectives by (1) listing the criteria from the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document used to evaluate the progress of each objective and (2) providing our assessment score for each criterion.

Figure 20: GAO Assessment of FEMA's Evaluation Criteria: Washington, as of March 2011^a

Development of well-coordinated and integrated preparedness plans through an effective planning process. ●		
Describe efforts to coordinate and integrate plans with state and federal partners.	●	Washington coordinated TFER plans with state agencies such as the Department of Licensing, Department of Labor and Industries, Department of General Administration, and the Department of Transportation; and federal partners such as FEMA.
Does TFER supported planning reflect the National Preparedness Guidelines and the full cycle of planning steps outlined in CPG 101?	●	The Washington TFER program supervisor stated the TFER planners are following the steps outlined in CPG-101, and have completed the full cycle of planning steps for one of its products.
Is TFER planning responsive to the National Planning Scenarios and/or other threats identified through the state's own all-hazards risk assessment?	●	Washington selected a catastrophic earthquake (and accompanying tsunami) as the primary scenario for TFER, which is one of the national planning scenarios. Specific plans developed for the scenario address gaps identified by the state through a gap analysis.
Are TFER developed plans consistent with current state emergency plans? Are they integrated and not duplicative?	●	TFER-developed plans integrate with existing state plans and fill gaps in the state plan compendium. TFER plans are annexes to the state's base emergency operations plan, and are not duplicative.
Have actual plans been produced?	●	The state is developing logistics plans and a catastrophic incident plan for TFER. It has finalized two of its seven plans, and has final drafts for three others.
Establishment of cross-sector and interagency relationships and protocols. ○		
Does TFER supported planning reflect the formation and involvement of the sort of integrated and collaborative planning teams described in CPG 101?	●	According to state officials, Washington developed planning teams that included planners from the state emergency management division and other state agencies, as well as relevant local, federal, and private sector stakeholders.
Have mechanisms been established/augmented and employed to ensure cross-sector, multijurisdictional, and interagency planning coordination and integration?	●	Washington's TFER program augmented already established practices of coordination and integration such as focused workgroups that included representatives from local, state, federal, and nongovernmental organizations.
Have TFER supported plans been coordinated with local jurisdictions? State agencies? Which ones? Federal partners? Which ones?	●	Washington coordinated TFER plans with local jurisdictions including those engaged in the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant; state agencies including the Department of Licensing, Department of Labor and Industries, General Administration, and the Department of Transportation; and federal partners through FEMA Region X.
Has a blending of TFER civil-military planning expertise been fully exploited to assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning?	○	State officials told us that the planners' military planning experience accelerated the learning of civilian planning protocols and helped the program advance the state's logistics and catastrophic planning. Washington TFER planners coordinated with the National Guard as the Adjutant General oversees the National Guard and the state emergency management division where the TFER planners were placed, but this coordination was limited by deployments. However, state officials told us coordination with DOD entities such as the Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer were minimally involved. State officials said further coordination with DOD was limited because the draft plans were not yet ready for DOD review and coordination with the federal government agencies normally occurs through FEMA unless the federal agency is directly involved in plan development.
How have TFER efforts incorporated the capabilities of the private sector as partners in planning activities?	●	Private sector groups were involved in the planning and exercising of TFER products. For example, the Red Cross participated in one of the TFER workgroups, and multiple private sector associations played roles in developing the Reception and Integration Plan and exercise.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with other states?	●	TFER efforts have been shared with neighboring states and Hawaii to help them understand Washington's intentions and processes for logistics response support.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with FEMA?	○	Washington TFER planners coordinated with FEMA, but officials told us that coordination could be improved. Specifically, state officials told us FEMA Region X participated in workgroups and provided suggestions on planning, but FEMA headquarters provided limited guidance on the implementation of the program, and grant guidance was inconsistent.

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Documentation of lessons learned and recommendations for improvement ●		
Have any exercise after-action reports or assessment documents been developed by the site in the course of the TFER Pilot implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot?	●	The state has exercised three of its TFER products during two exercises and developed after-action reports for these exercises.
Please provide recommendations for improvement to increase the effectiveness of the catastrophic planning programs.	●	The state provided a number of recommendations, including: continue and expand the program to other states, maintain the broad scope of the projects eligible to be addressed by the TFER resources, and dedicate funding for catastrophic planning. Additionally, state officials recommended that future catastrophic planning programs have longer time frames than the TFER pilot program and FEMA provide more guidance. Further, FEMA could improve in management of grants like TFER.

- Substantial progress
 - ◐ Some progress
 - Little to no progress
- Source: GAO analysis of information.

^aWe selected these criteria from the TFER Evaluation Criteria document and the TFER Pilot Information Package. We did not assess 10 of the criteria, as described in app. I, because they do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results.

We gathered additional information from Washington on developing plans and documenting lessons learned, but were unable to quantify this information using FEMA’s evaluation criteria. For example, Washington selected projects for TFER which were previously identified as part of the state’s future emergency planning work. Washington’s TFER planning also synchronized with catastrophic planning efforts undertaken through the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program as both efforts included evacuation and logistics components. However, we were unable to assess the degree to which TFER efforts were synchronized with other planning efforts because we did not have a basis for measuring how this synchronization improved the effectiveness of planning efforts. Further, Washington’s TFER plans contain some but not all of the recommended sections described in CPG 101, but state and FEMA officials stated that omitted sections are included in other state planning documents. We could not fully assess the content of Washington’s plans because five out of seven of the plans are in draft form. According to state officials, accomplishments included drafting both catastrophic logistics plans and developing a closer working relationship with Hawaii, Oregon, and California by participating in Hawaii’s annual hurricane exercise.

West Virginia

West Virginia focused its TFER pilot on developing response plans for three scenarios: a chemical incident, a mass evacuation of the National Capital Region, and a dam failure. In figure 21, we summarize West

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Virginia's TFER initiatives, note their status, and describe the role of the planners working on them.

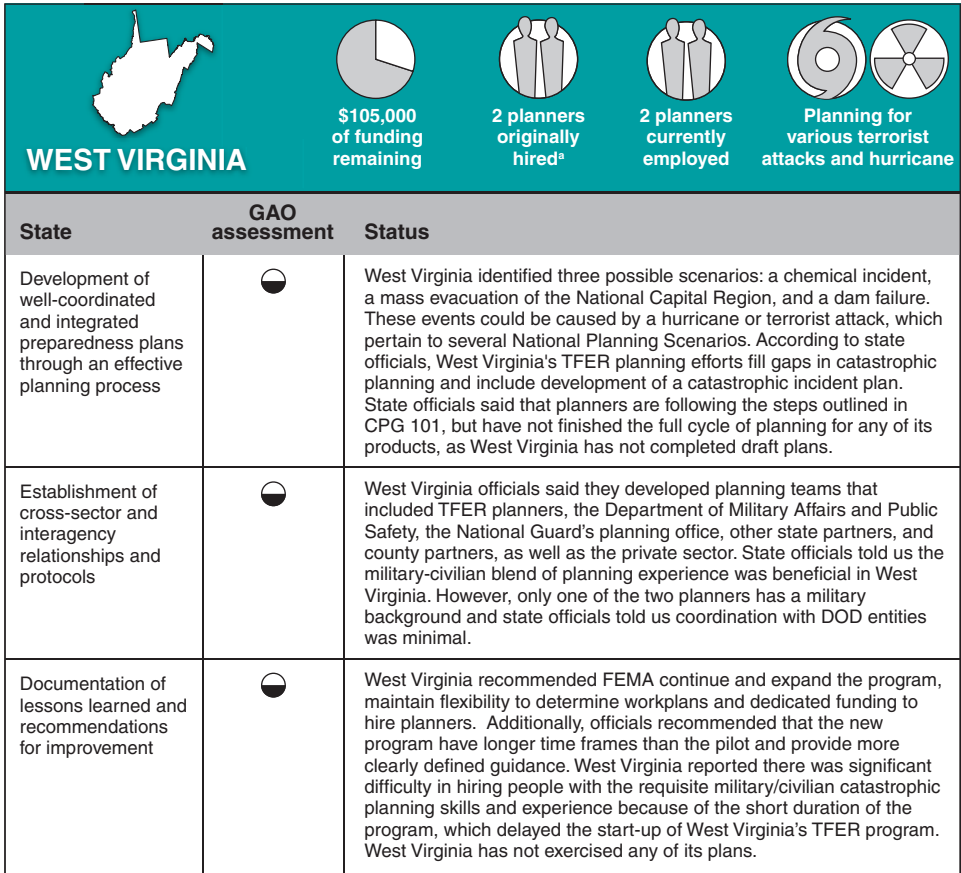
Figure 21: Summary and Status of West Virginia's TFER Initiatives and the Role of Planners Working on Them, as of March 2011

TFER initiative	Status	Planners' role
Catastrophic Incident Annex Provides procedures that allow emergency management officials to coordinate the application of federal, state, and local resources in response to a catastrophic event to prevent loss of life, minimize damage to property, and protect the environment	Preliminary draft completed Full draft is expected to be completed by summer 2011	Draft annex
Capacity development plans Designs planning tools to help the TFER planners assess counties' catastrophic planning strengths and weaknesses for each of the three scenarios worked on by the planners	Ongoing – 21 of these planning tools written and at varying degrees of completion: 7 for the chemical incident scenario 4 for the National Capitol Region mass evacuation scenario 10 for the dam failure scenario	Draft planning tools
Narrow the focus tools - Identify assets and gaps, such as shelter capacity and cots for each of the three scenarios worked on by the TFER planners - Inform the Capacity Development Plans	Ongoing	Develop focus tools
Bluestone Dam Failure Appendix - Informs the federal, state, and local response in the event of a failure of the Bluestone Dam - Serves as a hazard-specific appendix to the Catastrophic Incident Annex	Ongoing	Aid plan development
Kanawha County Evacuation Plan Presents guidelines for emergency services agencies in Kanawha County to help ensure a coordinated evacuation of the population, including in the event of a failure of the Bluestone Dam	Draft complete	Ensure consistency between the plan and national planning doctrine like Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

West Virginia is still spending TFER funds and currently has one TFER planner employed. As of March 2011, West Virginia had made some progress in meeting FEMA's stated pilot objectives. In figure 22, we depict the funding expenditure status of the West Virginia TFER pilot program and our assessment of the progress made in the pilot program towards addressing FEMA's stated pilot program objectives.

Figure 22: Expenditure Status of the West Virginia TFER Pilot and Our Assessment of Progress Made towards Addressing FEMA's Objectives, as of March 2011



- Substantial progress
- Some progress
- Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

*One of the TFER planners is a National Guardsman who was mobilized in September 2010. He is expected to resume his TFER planning position when he returns. West Virginia hired another TFER planner in December 2011.

In figure 23, we detailed figure 22's assessment of the progress made in West Virginia's TFER pilot program towards addressing FEMA's stated objectives by (1) listing the criteria from the TFER Pilot Information Package and the TFER Evaluation Criteria document used to evaluate the progress of each objective and (2) providing our assessment score for each criterion.

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Figure 23: Criteria Used to Assess Progress Made in West Virginia TFER Pilot towards Addressing FEMA Objectives, as of March 2011^a

Development of well-coordinated and integrated preparedness plans through an effective planning process. ●		
Describe efforts to coordinate and integrate plans with state and federal partners.	●	West Virginia officials told us they coordinated TFER planning efforts with the West Virginia National Guard, Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture, and other state agencies, and also coordinated with federal partners such as FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers.
Does TFER supported planning reflect the National Preparedness Guidelines and the full cycle of planning steps outlined in CPG 101?	◐	West Virginia officials stated that the TFER planners are following the steps outlined in CPG 101, but have not finished the full cycle of planning for any of its products.
Is TFER planning responsive to the National Planning Scenarios and/or other threats identified through the state's own all-hazards risk assessment?	●	West Virginia identified three possible scenarios: a chemical incident, a mass evacuation of the National Capital Region, and a dam failure. These events could be caused by a hurricane or terrorist attack, which pertain to several National Planning Scenarios.
Are TFER developed plans consistent with current state emergency plans? Are they integrated and not duplicative?	●	West Virginia's TFER planning efforts fill an existing gap in catastrophic planning and are intended to integrate with the base emergency operations plan, according to state officials. State officials told us that similar planning efforts are underway apart from TFER, but TFER integrates with those efforts as well.
Have actual plans been produced?	◐	West Virginia developed a preliminary draft for a catastrophic incident annex and several planning tools under TFER. These efforts are ongoing.
Establishment of cross-sector and interagency relationships and protocols ◐		
Does TFER supported planning reflect the formation and involvement of the sort of integrated and collaborative planning teams described in the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101?	◐	West Virginia officials stated that they developed planning teams that included TFER planners, the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety, the National Guard's planning office, other state partners, and county partners. However, the state faced challenges coordinating and integrating plans with some stakeholders.
Have mechanisms been established/augmented and employed to ensure cross-sector, multijurisdictional, and interagency planning coordination and integration?	●	According to state officials, the TFER program integrated with already established workgroups such as Homeland Security Forums and Local Emergency Planning Committees.
Have TFER supported plans been coordinated with local jurisdictions? State agencies? Which ones? Federal partners? Which ones?	●	West Virginia officials told us they coordinated TFER planning efforts using a bottom-up approach, including coordination at the local level with all 55 counties in the state. Further, TFER planners coordinated with the West Virginia National Guard, Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture, and other state agencies, and also coordinated with federal partners such as FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers. West Virginia officials told us that they faced challenges coordinating and integrating plans. For example, some state and local stakeholders resisted coordination and overestimated their planning capacities.
Has a blending of TFER civil-military planning expertise been fully exploited to assess, strengthen, and advance state catastrophic preparedness planning?	◐	State officials told us the military-civilian blend of planning experience was beneficial in West Virginia. Specifically, one West Virginia TFER planner is an active member of the state National Guard and coordinated regularly with the Guard planning office; the other is a retired fire chief with decades of emergency response experience. However, coordination with DOD entities such as the Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer was minimal. State officials said that further coordination with DOD was limited because the draft plans were not yet ready for DOD review.
How have TFER efforts incorporated the capabilities of the private sector as partners in planning activities?	●	According to state officials, TFER workgroups, such as Local Emergency Planning Committees, include multiple private sector stakeholders.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with other states?	●	State officials told us that, in order to develop a comprehensive Catastrophic Incident Annex, West Virginia TFER planners reviewed plans and other planning products from other TFER states such as South Carolina and Washington. Specifically, West Virginia is using South Carolina's Catastrophic Incident Annex as a template for its own Catastrophic Incident Annex.
Have TFER pilot states coordinated with FEMA?	◐	West Virginia officials said planners coordinated infrequently with both FEMA Region III and headquarters officials. Regional officials did, however, help them obtain needed information for the dam failure and National Capitol Region mass evacuation scenarios.

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Documentation of lessons learned and recommendations for improvement 		
Have any exercise after-action reports or assessment documents been developed by the site in the course of the TFER Pilot implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot?		According to state officials, they have not exercised their plans. As such, the state has not developed any exercise after-action reports.
Please provide recommendations for improvement to increase the effectiveness of the catastrophic planning programs.		West Virginia provided a number of recommendations, including: continue and expand the program, maintain flexibility to determine workplans and dedicated funding to hire planners for catastrophic planning. Additionally, officials recommended that the new program have longer time frames than the pilot and provide more clearly defined guidance. West Virginia reported there was significant difficulty in hiring people with the requisite military/civilian catastrophic planning skills and experience because of the short duration of the program, which delaying the start-up of West Virginia's TFER program.

-  Substantial progress
-  Some progress
-  Little to no progress

Source: GAO analysis of state information.

^aWe selected these criteria from the TFER Evaluation Criteria document and the TFER Pilot Information Package. We did not assess 10 of the criteria, as described in app. I, because they do not inform the extent to which states met the objective and/or there was not enough information to quantify the results.

We gathered additional information on West Virginia's efforts to develop plans and document lessons learned for the criteria we were unable to quantify. For example, we analyzed West Virginia's Catastrophic Incident Annex, which did not contain all of the CPG 101 components. West Virginia reported that the development of this draft annex fulfilled one of the main objectives of the pilot program. However, we were unable to fully assess the content of the annex because it is incomplete and work is ongoing. Additionally, West Virginia TFER planners determined during their assessments that there were insufficient personnel available at the county level to accomplish the tasks necessary during an incident response. In some cases, key individuals were identified as having multiple roles and/or responsibilities, which would be impossible to fulfill during an actual catastrophic incident. Further, West Virginia reported the "bottom up" approach of the West Virginia TFER pilot program is highly effective in communicating and working with local jurisdictions, but may prove to be less useful in an urban setting. According to state officials, West Virginia's TFER efforts are synchronized with the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program to ensure efforts are not duplicative, particularly for the mass evacuation scenario.

Appendix V: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

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Related GAO Products

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